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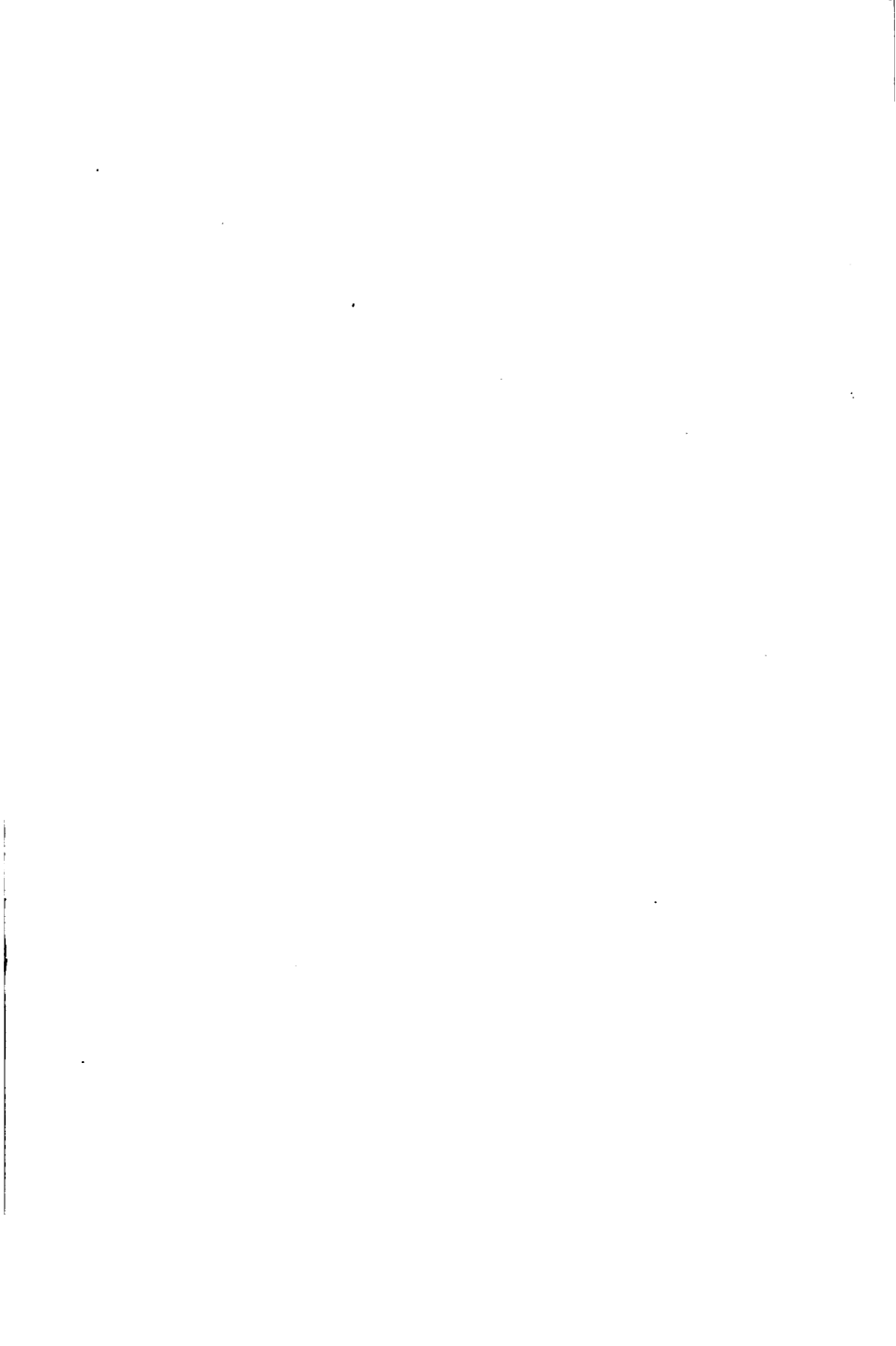
JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES

Professor of English 1918-1930

Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English
Literature 1930-1945







The Hemlock Avenue Mystery



“ IN A MOMENT HALF A DOZEN MEN WERE BETWEEN THEM.”

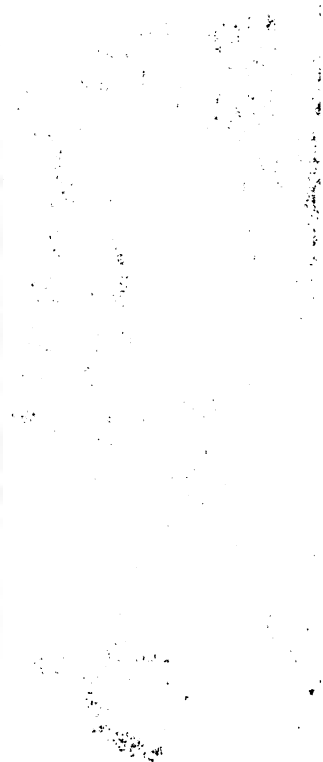
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Charles Gruenwald

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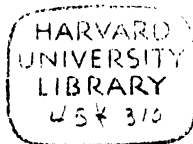
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The Hemlock Avenue Mystery

CHAPTER I

YOUNG Lyon, lounging in the Court House to make up his daily tale of items for the *Waynscott News*, was perhaps the only man who knew exactly how the quarrel between Lawrence and Fullerton began, though, when later events had made that quarrel take on an unexpected significance, he was exactly the one man who did not talk about it.

Through the glass side-panel of the door he had seen Lawrence coming up the stone walk from the street, and he had watched him with eagerness, meaning to get a nod as he passed, for Lawrence was not only a rising young lawyer, but, what was more important to the cub reporter, he had just won the championship in the curling contest of the city clubs. Slight as was Lyon's acquaintance with him, it had the touch of hero-worship which

a youth is always ready to pour out as an offering before a man who is at once an athlete, a social success, a man eminent in professional life, and withal magnetic and charming in his personal relations, as Lawrence was. So he counted it luck just to have the chance to say "Good morning." It seems that Fullerton must have approached from the side street, for the two men met at the foot of the Court House steps and came up together. Lyon noticed that though they nodded to each other they did not speak. At the top Fullerton pushed ahead so as to come first through the revolving pepperbox of a storm-door which made the entrance of fresh air to the Court House as difficult as was the exit of foul air within. Lawrence swung through in the next compartment, pushing the door around much more rapidly than suited Fullerton's dignified gait. The knowledge that he had thumped his distinguished predecessor's heels probably cheered Lawrence's heart, for he cried gayly as he emerged,

"You see I follow in your footsteps."

"Not for the first time," said Fullerton in level tones, with a slow lifting of his lowered eyelids.

The effect of those quiet words on Lawrence's temper was surprising. Instantly his hand flashed out and he slapped Fullerton's face.

In a moment half a dozen men were between them. Some one restored Fullerton's hat, which had fallen off at his sudden start, while others

officially laid restraining hands on Lawrence, who was trembling like a nervous horse.

"You may think a trick will win, but, by my soul, I'll take the trick," he cried hotly.

Fullerton, who was quite white except where the marks of Lawrence's fingers burned like a new brand on his cheek, stood perfectly still for an instant, with his eyes on the floor, as though waiting for anything further that his opposing counsel might have to say. Then he replaced his hat, bowed slightly to the group, and walked away to the elevator.

"Jove, if I had the grip on my temper that Fullerton has, I'd be Attorney General by now," said Lawrence lightly. "Guess I'll take the other elevator, all the same." And he walked jauntily down the hall.

The collected group of men burst into excited cross-currents of talk.

"What was it all about?"

"What will Fullerton do?"

"Gee, but Lawrence might be disbarred for that."

"Fullerton, of all men! He must be getting old, if he lets that pass."

"Oh, this isn't the end of it, you can bet on that all right."

"But what was it all about?"

"Why, Fullerton got a decision in the Symes case yesterday, — beat Lawrence on a technicality.

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It was rather sharp practice, but Fullerton goes into a case to win, and he knows all the tricks of the trade. You heard what Lawrence said about taking the trick?"

Yes, they had all heard what Lawrence had said. Lyon listened to the gossip, but contributed nothing. He was perfectly certain that Lawrence's hot speech about a trick had been expressly intended for the by-standers. The champion was too good a sport to take a professional defeat like a baby. And the quick speeches that had preceded the blow no one had heard but himself. He walked down the steps thoughtfully. It was his business to understand things.

But the quarrel did not appear among the news items he turned into the city editor.

CHAPTER II

I FOLLOW in your footsteps." — "Not for the first time."

The words echoed in Lyon's mind like a rebus which he must solve. There was a puzzle in them. Could he, by turning them and trying them, find the answer? Of course it wasn't really his business, but for some reason the puzzle haunted his mind.

He had an assignment that evening to report a concert given at the Hemlock Avenue Congregational Church, under the auspices of certain ladies sufficiently prominent in society to ensure a special reporter. He had timed himself to reach the church a little before nine, and as he walked briskly up the north side of Hemlock Avenue, his attention was attracted by the opening of a door in a house on the opposite side of the street. The light, streaming out toward him into the snowy whiteness of the night, showed a man at the door, parleying with the maid-servant within. After a moment the door closed and the man came slowly down the steps. He appeared to hesitate when he reached the street, then he turned up the avenue

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in the same direction that Lyon was going, and almost opposite him. As he passed under the street lamp, Lyon saw, with a sudden quick pleasure, that the man was Lawrence. He was walking laggingly, with his head bent. At the corner he turned south on Grant Street, and so soon passed out of sight.

Lyon's lively personal interest in Lawrence made him glance back at the house where his hero had evidently made an ineffective call, and wonder who it might be that lived there. Hemlock was an avenue that carried its air of sublimated respectability in every well-kept lawn and unfenced lot. Each house was set back from the street and was "detached," with trees and concrete walks and front lawn and back yard of its own. It was not a show street, but it was supremely well-bred. It struck Lyon, newly come from a busier city, as curious that, but for himself, Lawrence was the only person moving in the street. Not even a policeman was in sight.

This same seclusion and peace brooded over the scene when he retraced his way down that block on his early return from the concert an hour later. He was commenting upon the stillness to himself when he heard the sound of running feet approaching, and in a moment he saw the figure of a woman come running wildly toward him. About the middle of the block she cut diagonally across the street and ran into one of the houses opposite. Lyon

had instinctively quickened his own pace, for her panic flight suggested that she was pursued, but he could see no one following her. Then he noticed that the house where she had run in was, curiously enough, the same house where Lawrence had called earlier that evening. She had not gone in at the front door but had run around to the side of the house.

"Some servant maid who has overstayed her leave," he thought. "She ran well, though, — uncommonly good form for a kitchen girl. Bet she's had gymnasium work, whoever she is."

Reaching the end of the block he stopped and looked up and down the cross-street, Sherman, from which the girl had seemed to come. There was no one in sight. The street, snowily white and bare in the light of the gas lamps, lay open before him for long blocks. The music from a skating rink in the neighborhood came gayly to him on the frosty air and an electric car clanged busily in the near distance. As he moved on, his eye was caught by something dark on the white snow at the edge of the pavement, — a black silk muffler it proved to be, when he picked it up. Had the girl dropped it or merely hurried past it? It was a man's muffler. He was about to toss it back into the street when some instinct — the professional instinct of the reporter to understand everything he sees — made him roll it up and tuck it instead into his overcoat pocket.

He hurried on, meaning to catch the next car a few blocks below, when the shrill and repeated call of a policeman's whistle cut across the night. Lyon stopped. That sharp and insistent call suggested a more exciting "story" than his church concert. He hurried back to Sherman Street, and half-way down the block, midway between Hemlock Avenue and Oak Street, he saw the officer standing. It was not until he came close up that Lyon saw the gray heap on the ground near the officer's feet.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Man dead," the officer answered laconically.

Running feet were answering the signal of the whistle, and in less time than it takes to tell it, they were the center of an excited crowd. Donohue, the police officer, ordered the crowd sharply to stand back, while he sent the first watchman who had come up to telephone for the patrol wagon.

"If any one is hurt, I am a physician," one man said, pushing his way to the front.

"He's hurted too bad for you to do him any good," Donohue said.

The physician knelt down beside the fallen man, however, and made a hasty examination.

"The man is quite dead," he said, at length. "There's a bruise on the temple, — the blow probably killed him instantly. But he has been dead a few minutes only."

At that there were excited suggestions that the

murderer could not have got far away, and some one proposed an immediate search of the neighborhood. But no one started. The center of interest was in that gray-clad heap on the ground.

"Who is the man? — Do you know who it is, officer?" some one asked.

Donohue, obviously resentful of the presence of this unauthorized jury, made no answer. Lyon, watchful professionally for all details, suddenly recognized Lawrence in one of the men who stood nearest the body. There was something in the fixity of the look which he was bending upon the dead man that made Lyon's eye follow his, and then in his amaze he pushed past Donohue and knelt to look into the face resting against the curb.

"Good heavens, it's Fullerton, — Warren Fullerton, the lawyer," he cried.

The volley of exclamations and questions which he drew down upon himself by this declaration were interrupted by the clang of the patrol wagon, which came down the street at a run. The three men on the wagon swung themselves down and cleared the crowd out of their way in a moment, and expeditiously lifted the limp gray body in. Donohue swung himself on the step and the wagon drove off at a decorous gait, leaving another police officer on the ground to watch the rapidly dispersing crowd.

Lyon, well aware that a more experienced hand than his own would be assigned to work up the

story he had stumbled upon, deemed it his duty to report at once to the office instead of trying to do anything further on his own account, and hurried away to catch the car down-town. A man came up behind and fell into his own hurried gait to keep pace with him.

"You've struck an exciting story," said Lawrence's voice.

"Yes," said Lyon, eagerly. His eagerness was more due to the pleasant surprise of having Lawrence single him out to walk with than to anything else. His secret hero-worship had never brought him anything more than a friendly nod before.

"Are you going to write it up?"

"I'll have to report for instructions. They'll probably send some one else up to the station to follow matters up, but perhaps the city editor will let me write up this part of it."

"You have a good deal of responsibility," said Lawrence.

"Responsibility?"

"I mean in the way of influencing public opinion."

"I have nothing to do but to tell the facts, and there aren't many of them yet."

"You have to select the facts to speak of," Lawrence said. He was keeping up with Lyon's quick pace, but his voice was so deliberate that it made Lyon unconsciously pull up.

"I suppose so."

"If you wanted to make a sensational report, for instance, you could work in the peaceful night and the deserted street and other things that really have no relation to the facts in such a way as to connect them in the public mind."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"That's what I meant about your responsibility, — responsibility to the public and responsibility to the individuals you may happen to work into your story."

Lyon nodded. He felt that there was something behind this not yet clear to him.

"You were fortunate in being on the spot. You must have been the first man there. I was close behind you, I think. I was not far behind you when you came down Hemlock Avenue."

Then suddenly Lyon understood. It was quite as though Lawrence had said, "I hope you will not consider it necessary to mention that a minute or two after the time of the murder you saw a woman running in terror from the spot and going into a house where I call." He had quite forgotten the running girl for the moment. Now the sudden bringing together of the two ideas staggered him.

"There are things that once said can never be unsaid," said Lawrence.

"Yes."

"That's why I am glad it has fallen into your hands to write it up instead of into the hands of

some sensation monger who would not have the instinct of a gentleman about what to say and what to leave unsaid. By the way, it was you who identified the man as Fullerton, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Lyon slowly. He recalled the fixed look that Lawrence had bent upon the body in silence. It was impossible that he had not recognized his enemy in the dead man. Why had he held back the natural impulse to speak his name?

"I'll look for your report with interest. And, by the way, don't you lunch at the Tillamook Club? Look me up some day. I'm usually there between one and two. Glad to have seen you. Good night."

Lyon found that "story" more difficult to write up than he had anticipated.

CHAPTER III

TO say that Waynscott was amazed on the appearance of the *News* the next morning would be to put it mildly. That a prominent lawyer should be found dead in the best residence quarter of the city at the early hour of ten, and that the police authorities should have nothing to offer, was enough to set the whole city talking. Fullerton had not been particularly popular, but he was a man of mark. A bachelor, he had lived at a fashionable apartment house, the Wellington; he had no family, no intimate friends, and there were men at his club who would not play with him, but still he was a personage. The city buzzed with the decorous joy of discussing a full-fledged sensation of its own.

Was it murder? Was it an accident? Had he any personal enemies? Was it highway robbery? What were the police good for, anyhow? The result of the coroner's inquest was awaited with the keenest interest.

The body had been taken to the morgue, and the inquest was held there the next day. The significant testimony, as it was sifted out, was as follows:

Donohue, the police officer, was called first. He testified that he had been at the corner of Oak and Grant Streets when he heard the Court House clock strike the quarter before ten. He had walked down Oak Street one block at a slow pace, and had turned south on Sherman Street, when his attention was caught by a gray something on the ground at the edge of the sidewalk. At first he thought it was a large dog. Then, as he walked toward it, he saw that it was a man fallen against the curbing. He touched him, lifted his head, and found that the man was not drunk but dead. He had heard no outcry, no disturbance, no sound of running.

After satisfying himself that the man was dead he had blown his whistle to call the officer on the next beat, and had sent him to telephone for the patrol wagon. The first person who came up was Mr. Lyon, but there soon was a crowd about them.

"Did you recognize the body as Mr. Fullerton?" the county attorney asked.

"Not just at first," Donohue answered with some hesitation.

"Did you know him by sight?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you did not recognize him?"

"It was his coat. He didn't have that gray coat on usually, — not when I saw him before that evening."

“When and where did you see him before that evening?”

“I was coming up Oak Street past the Wellington, and I saw Mr. Fullerton come out with a lady. They walked so slow that I passed them. Mr. Fullerton wore a long loose black topcoat. I noticed because he had both his hands stuck in his pockets. So when I found the man in a gray coat it threw me off. Afterwards —” Donohue hesitated again over his astonishing conclusion — “afterwards we found that he had his black coat on wrong side out. The inside was gray.”

The overcoat was brought out for the jury and examined. It was a long, loose garment, black on the outside, gray on the inner. Though not intended for reversible wearing, it was obvious that it could have been easily turned. The question that at once occurred to every listener was whether the garment had been turned by Fullerton himself, or whether it had been hastily and carelessly put on him by some one else after he had fallen unconscious. This was obviously in the examiner’s mind when he asked next,

“Was the overcoat buttoned when you came upon him?”

“No, it was open.”

“How was the body lying?”

“In a heap, as though his knees had crumpled up under him.”

“Officer, did you see no one on the street from

the time you left Oak Street and Grant Street until you found the body?"

"No one but Mr. Lawrence. It is a quiet neighborhood."

"When and where did you see Mr. Lawrence?"

"On Grant Street, going toward Hemlock Avenue. He passed me while I was standing on the corner."

"Just before you left the corner?"

"May be ten minutes before."

"If you had walked straight down Grant Street to Hemlock Avenue, down Hemlock Avenue to Sherman Street, and up Sherman Street to the spot where the body was found, how long would it have taken you to get there?"

Donohue considered carefully before he answered, "About seven minutes."

"Was Mr. Lawrence walking rapidly?"

"You might call it so."

"Officer, you spoke of seeing a lady with Mr. Fullerton when he left the Wellington earlier in the evening. Did you recognize the lady?"

"No, sir. I did not see her face. She wore a veil."

"Did you notice anything else about her or her dress?"

"She wore a short fur coat and a muff. Her dress was dark. I noticed as I passed by that she was crying under her veil, — sort of sobbing to

herself. That made me look sharp. Mr. Fullerton was walking kind of swaggering, with his hands in his pockets."

"Would you know the lady if you saw her again?"

"If she wore the same clothes, I might," Donohue answered somewhat doubtfully.

The physician, Dr. Sperry, who had pronounced Fullerton dead, was next called. He testified that he was returning from the concert, and was on Hemlock Avenue when he heard the police whistle. When he saw the crowd gathered on Sherman Street he had thought some one might be hurt, and had gone up to offer his professional assistance. He had found the man dead, with the mark of a severe blow on his temple.

"Dr. Sperry, will you describe the appearance of the wound?"

"It was a bruise rather than a wound. The temple was indented, showing that the delicate bone there had been crushed in. The skin was broken, and the blood had oozed down the left side of the face."

"Should you say that it was the mark of a heavy blow?"

"Yes, or a swinging blow. It was undoubtedly made by some dull instrument, heavy enough to crush, and yet with a metallic edge that cut the skin sharply."

"Would such a blow cause death at once?"

"Instantaneously."

"Can you say how long the man had been dead?"

"Not less than ten minutes. Not more than half an hour."

After an intimation that Dr. Sperry would be recalled later, Lyon was called.

Lyon had made no mention of the running girl in his report for the *News*, but he foresaw that that matter would come out in his examination, and he hastily resolved that there was one point of information which he would not volunteer, — the house which she had entered. Let them ask him, if they wanted to get at that!

He testified, in answer to the preliminary questions, that he was returning from the concert and was on Hemlock Avenue between Sherman and Hooker Streets when he heard the policeman's whistle and ran back to see what the disturbance was.

"You had passed the corner of Sherman Street a few minutes before?"

"Yes."

"And you saw nothing unusual?"

"I saw a man's muffler on the ground. I have turned it over to the officers."

The muffler was produced and examined. At one place the folds were stiff and matted together. The jury examined the stain.

"Was this spot wet when you picked the muffler up?"

"I did not notice."

"Did you see any one on the street?"

"While I was farther up on Hemlock Avenue I noticed a woman running across the street."

"How was she dressed?"

"I was too far away to see."

"Did she wear a veil?"

"I think not. I could not swear to it, however."

"Did you see Mr. Lawrence?"

"No, not until I saw him in the crowd afterwards."

"I believe it was you who first identified the body?"

"Yes."

"Was Mr. Lawrence present when you did so?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him examine the body?"

"I did not see him touch it."

"Was he near enough to identify the body?"

"He was near enough, so far as that goes."

"He did not volunteer any information as to who the dead man was, though he was near enough to recognize him, and presumably must have recognized him?"

"I did not hear him say anything."

"Was the light sufficiently bright to enable you to see clearly?"

“It was rather a shadowy spot. There are lamps at the corners of the block only. We were standing about the middle of the block.”

The next witness sprung the surprise of the day. He was a boy of eighteen, Ed Kenyon by name, who had been attracted by the quickly spreading report of a murder. Asked to tell his story, he said:

“After the rest of the crowd had gone home, some of us fellows thought we would hunt for the murderer, so we made up a party and looked in all the alleys and went through some of the back yards around there. Right across the street from where the body was found there is a vacant lot. It is a good deal lower than the sidewalk and there is a fence at the inside edge of the walk to keep people from falling off. We looked over the fence and we could see that the snow had been tramped down, as though there had been a scrap or something, so we jumped in and explored for what we could find. When you are down inside the lot there is a hole under the sidewalk, and we found this poked in behind some weeds in the hole.” And he produced the two pieces of a broken cane.

Lyon happened to glance at Lawrence at that moment, and he was startled by the look he surprised there. In an instant it was banished, and Lawrence's face was as non-committal, as impassive, as any in the room. But Lyon, watching him

now in wonder, felt that the passivity was fixed there by a conscious effort of the will.

The county attorney then recalled Dr. Sperry.

"In your opinion, could the fatal blow have been struck by such an instrument as this cane?"

"It would be quite possible."

"Would such a blow be apt to break the cane?"

"That would depend on how it was held."

"Will you examine the gold knob at the end of this piece and say whether you see anything to indicate that such a blow was actually struck with it?"

"There are a few short hairs caught by a rough place where the metal is joined to the wood. They look matted. It would require a scientific examination to determine whether that is blood or not."

Arthur Lawrence was then called.

"Do you recognize this cane, Mr. Lawrence?"

"Yes, it is mine. My name is engraved around the gold top."

"Will you inform the jury when you last had it in your possession?"

"I regret to say I cannot. I lost the cane some time ago."

"When and how did you lose it?"

"That I cannot say. I suppose I must have forgotten it somewhere. I simply know that I have not had it in my possession for some little time. I had missed it, but supposed it would eventually

turn up and be returned to me, as my name was on it."

"Please search your memory, Mr. Lawrence, as to the last time you had it in your possession."

Lawrence looked thoughtful.

"I remember that I had it last Wednesday when I was in the State Library, because I used it to reach a book on the top shelf."

"Did you leave it there?"

"I am under the impression that I took it away with me, but I have a careless habit of forgetting canes and umbrellas, and I had an exciting debate with Mr. Fullerton just before I left the room."

"With Warren Fullerton?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave the library with him?"

"No, I left alone. He was still there."

"You were on Sherman Street last night?"

"Yes."

"Will you give an account of your movements?"

"I was coming down Hemlock Avenue —"

"One moment. Where were you coming from?"

"I had been out for a tramp and was coming back. I had not been anywhere in particular."

"How long had you been tramping?"

Lawrence seemed to consider his answer before he spoke. "Something over an hour," he said.

"Were you alone all that time?"

" Yes."

" Did you see any one to speak to? "

" I spoke to Officer Donohue as I was coming back. I don't remember noticing any one else on my walk."

" You may resume your account. You say you were coming down Hemlock Avenue, — "

" I was midway between Grant and Sherman Streets when I heard the policeman's whistle and I ran down to Sherman Street to see what the trouble was."

" Did you see Mr. Lyon on Hemlock Avenue? "

" Yes."

" Where was he? "

" He was going down the street ahead of me."

" Mr. Lyon has testified that he was between Sherman and Hooker Streets when the whistle was heard. That would put him nearly a block ahead of you. Did you identify him at that distance? "

" He was not so far away when I first saw him."

" Where was he when you first saw him? "

" On Hemlock Avenue between Grant and Sherman Streets."

" Then you stood still, practically, while he walked a block? "

" He was certainly walking at a faster pace."

" Was there any one else on the street? "

" I saw no one except the girl who ran across Hemlock Avenue, of whom Mr. Lyon spoke."

"Can you describe her?"

"No. I was farther from her than Lyon was."

"When you heard the policeman's whistle, did you go at once to the spot?"

"No, I paid no attention to it at first. Afterwards, when I saw a crowd was gathering, I fell in with the rest to see what had happened."

"Did you recognize the body when you came up?"

"Yes."

"Did you have any reason for refraining from so stating?"

"I was shocked and startled to see who the man was. I had no definite reason, either for speaking or for silence."

"What were your personal relations with Mr. Fullerton?"

"We were not friendly."

"When did you speak to him last?"

"Yesterday morning, in the Court House."

"What was the nature of your conversation at that time?"

"It was of rather a violent nature," said Lawrence, with the slightest drawl. "I had occasion to slap his face."

The boys who had been with Ed Kenyon were called to corroborate his story of finding the broken cane. Lawrence had changed his seat, and now sat beside Lyon. He gave no sign of recognition at

first, but after a few minutes, when there was a buzz of talk in the room, he turned to Lyon and said, with a casual air that could not conceal his intention,

“ You see what this is leading to. They will arrest me for the murder before I leave the room. Don’t answer me. Only listen and remember. I am going to ask you to do me a favor, — the very greatest favor that any living man could do me. I want you to go to the house that girl entered and tell her that I am sending her word by you to keep from speaking of this affair. Make her understand that she must volunteer no information, make no explanation, say nothing, no matter what happens. She will hear of my arrest. Make her understand that arrest is a long way off from conviction. Make that as strong as you can. Tell her that no jury in the world would convict on such evidence. Make light of the whole thing as much as possible, but tell her that I implore and entreat — I would use a stronger word if I dared — that she say nothing to any one at any time in regard to this whole matter. To you I will say — and remember this — that I would rather die than to have her name entangled in this affair in any manner. I’ll make a fight for it first, of course, but literally, I would rather go through with it to the bitter end than to have her life darkened by any shadow, and this would be a shadow that could never be lifted. If I could speak more strongly,

I would. I am trusting this to you because I must get word to her at once and convincingly, and I dare not write, — and because I believe you are my friend. Her name is Edith Wolcott.”

And before Lyon could frame any answer, Lawrence had slightly moved his position again, so as to put a space between them.

Lyon listened to the remaining testimony with attentive ears but a throbbing brain. He had been suddenly swept into the very center of the mystery. He knew no more than before, but knowledge was all around him, pressing against the thin walls of his ignorance. His own share in the evening's events suddenly became significant. Lawrence had made no mistake in choosing his envoy. Neither had he made any mistake in his diagnosis of the situation. Before he left the room, he had been arrested for the murder of Warren Fullerton.

CHAPTER IV

PERCY LYON had a natural gift for human nature, as some people have for music or for mechanics. Unconsciously and instinctively, he could read character, and as with all instinctive knowledge, he was utterly unable to say how he reached his conclusions. His judgment had so often proved to be truer than appearances that it had surprised even himself. His success in his newspaper work depended almost wholly upon this gift. In news as news he had little interest, and he often chafed at the routine drudgery of his assignments, but when his work was to "write up" some one, whether it was a drunken tramp arrested for disorderly conduct, a visiting diplomat surrounded with mystery and red tape, a famous actress or an infamous trust-president, he was in his element. He would sit and look at his victim with quiet, dreaming eyes, listen with sympathetic attention to whatever he might say, and then go away and write up a sketch that would reveal the inner life of his subject's mind in a manner that was sometimes startling to the man himself.

"Who told you that? — How did you find that out?" was frequently asked.

And Lyon would laugh and pass it off as a joke, or if pressed, would probably answer, "Why, I don't know; that's what I should do, or feel, or think, if I were in his place. — I got that impression about him, that's all." But the point was that the impressions he received were so apt to be psychologically correct that it seemed almost uncanny. It was something like clairvoyance.

As he turned away from the inquest to carry out the mission that had so unexpectedly been entrusted to him, he felt perfectly convinced, in his own mind, of Lawrence's innocence.

In spite of the quarrel in the morning with its proof of Lawrence's temper and Fullerton's self-control, in spite of the damning fact that Lawrence's cane, broken and hidden, would appear to be the instrument with which the fatal blow was struck, in spite of the curious fact that Lawrence had held his peace when he must have recognized the dead man, Lyon found himself inwardly committed to the faith that Lawrence was not directly involved. He faced and set aside as simply unexplained the fact of Lawrence's presence in the neighborhood. By Donohue's testimony, Lawrence was going in the direction of the tragedy about half an hour before the body was discovered. By Lyon's own knowledge, Lawrence must have been behind him on Hemlock Avenue as he came down that block, else how had he, too, seen the running girl? In other words, he had spent half an hour

loitering on the street of a winter night within a compass of two blocks. Of course the mystery involved the girl, for whose good name he was so deeply concerned.

How she was involved he could not even hazard a guess — until he should have seen her. Did Lawrence entertain the thought that she was involved in the affair in any other way than as a possible witness? If she was merely a disinterested witness, would he have felt bound, at such cost, to keep her from being called upon? Lyon felt that was a forced explanation. No, Lawrence must either know or believe that the girl was vitally connected with the murder. Nothing else would explain his anxiety on her behalf. Now, who was the girl? It was luck and great luck that he had so good a justification for calling, as otherwise he would have been forced to invent an occasion. It was beyond all reason to expect him to relinquish the pursuit of such a clue.

He made his way at once to the house where he had seen Lawrence call. His ring was answered by an elderly servant, slow and stiff in her movements. Lyon recalled with a smile his fancy that the running girl might possibly be the maid, hurrying to conceal a tardy return to the house. This woman could not run for a fire.

“Is Miss Wolcott at home?” he asked.

The woman looked dubious and discouraging. “I’ll see,” she said.

"Please tell her that I will detain her only a moment, but that I have a very important message for her," Lyon said, giving the girl his card and quietly forcing his way past her into the reception room.

The old servant went slowly up-stairs, and Lyon took a swift survey of the room in which he was left, striving to guess the character of the owners. Books, pictures, flowers, all betokened refined and gentle ways of living. Unpretentious as it was, this was evidently the home of cultured people.

A slow step was heard in the hall, and an old man came to the door of the drawing room and looked in at Lyon with a mingling of mild dignity and child-like friendliness that was peculiarly attractive.

"I *thought* I heard some one come in," he said, with obvious pleasure at finding his guess right. "Did you come to see my granddaughter?"

"I have sent up my card to Miss Wolcott," Lyon answered.

"She is my granddaughter. Didn't you know?" the old gentleman asked, in surprise. "I am Aaron Wolcott, you know. Maybe you are a stranger in Wayscott."

"Yes, I am a good deal of a stranger yet."

"What is your name, may I ask?"

"Percy Lyon."

The old gentleman took a chair opposite and regarded him with cheerful interest. "I am

pleased to meet you, Mr. Lyon. My granddaughter will be down soon. Eliza, our old servant, is slow because she has rheumatism. She's getting old, — but that isn't a crime, is it? I'll be getting old some time myself, I suppose. But I've got all my faculties yet, thank Heaven."

"Have you lived in this house long?" Lyon asked.

"I built this house twenty-five years ago for my son, — Edith's father, you know. There have been many changes, many changes. He died when he was thirty, and his young wife followed him and left the baby Edith and me alone together. There's something wrong when young people die and old people are left. We should not outlive our children."

"Do you mean that you live here entirely alone with your granddaughter?" asked Lyon, quickly. This was significant.

"Except for Eliza. Eliza is a good servant. Edith isn't much of a housekeeper. She doesn't care for anything but her music. But she's a good girl, Edith is."

"Did you wish to see me?" a cool, low voice asked at the door.

Lyon rose to his feet and bowed. "If you are Miss Wolcott, I have a message for you," he said, and by a pause he conveyed to her the idea that the message was for her alone.

Miss Wolcott regarded him for a moment with

an observant scrutiny which she made no attempt to disguise, and then she turned to her grandfather.

"It is time for your walk, Dandy," she said. She got him his overcoat, hat, and stick from the hall, and herself buttoned his coat up to his throat.

"You see how she spoils me," Mr. Wolcott said, with evident pride in his voice. "I'm old enough to look out for myself."

Edith did not speak. In grave silence she gave him his gloves, and watched him put them on while Lyon as intently watched her. She was a tall girl of perhaps twenty-five, with eyes of midnight blackness, broad black eyebrows that drooped in straight heavy lines toward her temples, and black hair that was drawn in smooth, broad bands at the side of her head to repeat the drooping line of her brows. Her mouth drooped too, in lines too firm to be called pensive, too proud to be sad. Altogether it was a face of mystery, — a face not easily read, but not the less powerful in its attraction. Lyon had a swift comprehension of Lawrence's feeling.

If this woman was in any way connected with the murder, the matter was serious as well as delicate. Lyon's pulses began to tingle as a hunter's do when he sees a mysterious "track" which he does not understand.

She let her grandfather out at the front door, and then came back to the room where Lyon was waiting. Calmly seating herself, she bent an in-

quiring and unsmiling look upon him. It struck him that she had shown nothing of her grandfather's tendency to unnecessary words.

"I have come at the request of Mr. Lawrence, who wished me to bring you a message," Lyon said.

There was something like a flash of light in her shadowy eyes, but whether it meant eagerness or anger, love or hate, Lyon could not say. She bent that same intent, unsmiling regard upon him, with only a deepening of its intentness, as though waiting for his next word with held breath.

"Mr. Lawrence considered it important that I should see you personally and at once, since he could not come himself to explain his reasons for what may sound like an extraordinary request," he went on deliberately.

She moved restlessly. "I have not seen Mr. Lawrence since —"

Lyon interrupted. "Pardon me, may I give you the message before you say anything more? Mr. Lawrence has been arrested on the charge of killing Warren Fullerton —"

"Oh, heavens, has it come to that?" the girl gasped, with horror on her face.

Lyon raised a warning hand. "And his urgent request to you is that you refrain from giving any information which you may possess in regard to the matter to any one. That of course includes myself."

Miss Wolcott was holding fast to the arms of the chair and her pallor seemed to have deepened visibly, but she did not lose her self-control for a moment.

Lyon would have given much to be able to tell whether the feeling which she obviously held back from expression was fear or concern or contempt.

"You of course saw the account of the murder in the morning papers," he continued, deeming it advisable to put her in possession of the situation as fully as possible. "The inquest was held to-day, and Mr. Lawrence has been taken into custody, — merely on suspicion, of course. It is known that he had had a quarrel with Mr. Fullerton, and his broken cane was found in the neighborhood."

Miss Wolcott's intense eyes seemed trying to drag out his words faster than he could utter them, but she asked no questions.

"This means that he will be held for the action of the Grand Jury, which will meet in about two weeks. Of course he will have an attorney to present his case. You are not to think that his arrest necessarily means anything worse than the necessity of making his innocence as obvious to the world at large as it is now to his friends. But in the meantime his great and immediate anxiety was that you should be warned to say nothing about the whole matter. Frankly, Miss Wolcott, I don't know whether your silence is to protect

him or to protect some one else, but I do know that he was profoundly in earnest in hoping that you would preserve that silence unbroken as long as possible."

"What do you mean by as long as possible?" she asked, slowly.

"If you should be summoned as a witness at the trial, you will of course have to tell everything within your knowledge connected with the affair."

She frowned thoughtfully. "Am I likely to be summoned as a witness?" she asked.

"That will depend on whether the prosecuting attorney or Mr. Lawrence's attorney gets an idea that you have any information in your possession which will help his side of the case."

She sat very still, with downcast eyes, for a long moment. Lyon made a movement of rising, and she checked him.

"One moment. When the trial comes off, will there be any way of my knowing how it is going?"

"It will be fully reported in the papers. You could be present in the court room if you think it advisable."

"I will think of it," she said quietly. Then her splendid self-control wavered for a moment. "If I should feel that I had to talk to some one, to understand things, — would you — might I —"

"May I come occasionally to tell you of any new developments?" Lyon asked, simply.

"Thank you. It will be kind of you."

"I shall be very glad to keep you informed." And then he added deliberately, intending that however much she might veil her own sympathies there should be no doubt in her mind as to his position, "I am a friend of Mr. Lawrence's. That is why he entrusted me with this word for you."

She bowed, somewhat distantly, without speaking, and Lyon left.

When he got outside, he allowed himself to indulge in a moment of puzzled and half-reluctant admiration. What superb nerve! Her connection with this mysterious case was evidently a close and vital one, yet she had held herself so well in hand that it was impossible for him to say now, after this momentous interview, whether her sympathies were with Lawrence or not. She had most completely understood and heeded his injunction to keep silence, at any rate. Was the injunction needed, in the face of such self-control? What was it that lay behind that shield? Lyon felt as though his hands were being bound by invisible bands, and he had a frantic desire to break his way clear and force a way to an understanding of things. Turning a corner he came upon the old grandfather taking his leisurely constitutional in the sun, and instantly he realized that Providence had placed in his hands the means of removing some of his assorted varieties of ignorance, — if

it is Providence who helps a man when he is trying to peer into his neighbor's business. There may be a difference in the point of view as to that. With a surreptitious glance at his watch, he fell into step beside Mr. Wolcott.

"Your quiet neighborhood has made itself rather notorious," he began, at a safe distance from his objective point. "I suppose you first learned of the murder through the papers this morning. Or did you hear the excitement last night?"

"I heard the grocer boy telling Eliza this morning," Mr. Wolcott answered. "I don't read the paper very much. My eyesight is all right, — my faculties are all as good as ever, — but they print the papers in such fine type nowadays, I don't care to read them."

"Well, Miss Wolcott would surely have read it and noticed about the murder."

"She wouldn't talk about it."

"Of course it is not a pleasant thing to talk about."

"That isn't all. You see, Edith was engaged to marry that Mr. Fullerton at one time."

"Really?" This was so startling a piece of information that Lyon stopped short in his surprise, trying to fit it into its place with the other things he knew or guessed. "Really!"

"Don't let on I told you," said the old gentleman, confidentially. "Edith doesn't like to have

me talk about her affairs. But that's the reason she is so strange to-day. Maybe you didn't notice, but she was very quiet all day."

"Do you think that she cared for him still?" demanded Lyon.

"Oh, no, no! That's all past. But it must have given her a queer feeling to have him killed so near her own door. No, she didn't care for him. If he had died in some other way, I think she would have been glad. I'm not sure she isn't glad as it is, though maybe she was a little scared to have her wish come true. — It is kind of awful to have something up there take you at your word."

"What makes you think that she would be glad?"

"Oh, I see things, if I am old. Edith doesn't think I notice, but I know more about things than she guesses. She said once that she wished he was dead. — I heard her."

"Really? How was that?"

"I had gone to sleep on the couch in the library, — not really asleep, of course, but I was lying down to rest my eyes for a moment, — and Edith didn't know I was there. I woke up and saw her standing by the window looking out, and she was so excited that she was talking aloud to herself. She threw up both hands, like this, and said aloud, — 'I wish to heaven you were dead, dead, dead!' Then she ran out of the room like a whirlwind,

and I got up and looked out of the window. Mr. Fullerton was standing on the sidewalk, looking up at the house. He touched his hat when he saw me, and smiled a nasty, sarcastic kind of a smile, and walked off."

"When was this?"

"Maybe two weeks ago."

"Did you ever speak of it to anyone?"

"Never, not a word. Not to anybody except Lawrence."

"Oh, you told Arthur Lawrence?"

"Yes, you see I like Lawrence, and I thought it was just as well to let him know that there wasn't anything between Edith and Fullerton any longer. I haven't forgotten about such things, even if I am getting to be an old man. You see, if Lawrence heard about that old engagement of Edith's it might make him hold off, so I just thought I'd let him know there wasn't anything to it now. It was all off."

"What did Mr. Lawrence say?"

"Not much. But he made me tell him again just what she said, and what she did. I guess he was glad to have the old man tell him, all right."

"You know Arthur Lawrence pretty well, don't you?" Lyon asked abruptly.

The old gentleman chuckled. "Oh yes, I don't have much chance to forget Mr. Lawrence. Of course it isn't me that he comes to see, but still he's very civil to the old grandfather! A deal

more civil than Mr. Fullerton ever was, by the same token. Edith was well off with that old love before she was on with the new."

Lyon was certainly getting more than he had expected. There was not much mystery now about the significance of Fullerton's slur on Lawrence for following in his footsteps, or about Lawrence's resentment. He was so absorbed in his own speculations on the subject that Mr. Wolcott had twice repeated a question before he heard it.

"Do you know if Mr. Lawrence is out of town?"

"No, he is here."

"He said Sunday he would bring me some new cigars the next time he came. I thought he might come last night, but he didn't. For that matter, Edith wasn't at home last night. Maybe he knew she wouldn't be. But she didn't tell *me* she was going to be out."

"Indeed?"

"No, she didn't. But I found it out. Even if my own eyes are not as young as they were, I can see things that are right under my nose. Edith said she had a headache and would have to go to her room instead of playing cribbage with me. So I had to play solitaire, and I don't like to play solitaire of an evening. When I was young the evening was always the time for society, and I'm not so old that I want to be poked off in a corner to play solitaire. So I went to her

room about ten o'clock to see if her head was better. We could have had a game of cribbage yet. Well, she wasn't there. She had gone out without saying a word to me. And while I was looking around she came in by the side door and came up the back stairs. I asked her where in the world she had been at that time of the night, and she never answered, — just went in to her room and locked the door. Now, do you think that is a proper way for a young woman to treat her elders? When I was young, we didn't dare to treat *our* elders in that way."

"I am sure you didn't," said Lyon, soothingly.

"And do you think it was proper for her to be out so late at night without saying anything to anyone in the house?"

"I am sure Miss Wolcott will be worried if you stay out so long," said Lyon, evasively. "She'll blame me for keeping you talking. Good-by. I am very glad to have met you. Some evening you must let me come and play a game of cribbage with you."

He turned to leave him, and then, with a sudden second thought, he came back. "Tell Miss Wolcott that I fell in with you, and that we had a pleasant chat," he said.

He had sufficient confidence in Miss Wolcott's discretion by this time to feel sure the message would set her to investigating the nature of the conversation, and possibly she would know how

to sequestrate or suppress her garrulous relative until the peculiar circumstances of that evening should have faded out of his memory. The circumstances were so peculiar that Lyon could not help feeling it was fortunate that he, and not some police officer for instance, had received the old gentleman's confidences.

CHAPTER V

LYON went straight to the jail to report to Lawrence. He had little difficulty in securing admittance, for the sheriff was sufficiently pliable and Lawrence sufficiently important to permit a softening of the rigors of prison discipline in his case. His arrest might, indeed, be considered merely a detention on suspicion until the Grand Jury had formally indicted him, and the sheriff had evidently considered that his duty was filled by ensuring his safety, without undue severity. The room was guarded without and barred within, but in itself it was more an austere furnished bedroom than a cell, and Lawrence had more the air of a host receiving his guests than a prisoner. That, however, was Lawrence's way. It would have taken more than a stone wall and a locked door to force humiliation upon him. He tossed circumstances aside like impertinent meddlers, and scarcely condescended to be aware of their futile attempts to hamper him.

At the moment he was in consultation with his attorney, Howell, — or, rather, Howell was trying to hold a consultation with him, and, judging by his looks, not very successfully.

"It is unfortunate that your memory should be so curiously unequal," Howell said drily, as Lyon entered.

"If it is equal to the occasion, that's sufficient," Lawrence said carelessly. "Don't you be putting on airs with me, Howell. I'm your associate counsel in this affair. You go and see if you can get me out on bail, and then we'll talk some more. Hello, here's Lyon, of the *News*. At last I have attained to a distinction I have secretly longed for all my life. I am going to be interviewed."

"If he succeeds in getting any really valuable information out of you, I'll take him on for associate counsel," grumbled Howell, as he gathered up his papers and took his departure.

"Well?" demanded Lawrence, the instant they were alone. His Celtic blue eyes were snapping with impatience.

"I delivered your message. Judging from the balance of our interview, your hint was accepted."

Lawrence laughed. He threw himself down in his chair and laughed with a keen appreciation of the situation suggested by Lyon's words and a sudden relaxation of his nervous tension that struck Lyon as significant.

"Come, you might tell me something more, considering!" he said.

"There isn't much that I know," said Lyon. But he understood very well what it was that Lawrence wanted and he went over his interview with

a good deal of detail. Lawrence sat silent, listening, with his hand hiding his mouth and his eyes veiled by their drooping lids. At the end he drew a long breath and slowly stretched his arms above his head.

"Well, that's all right, and you're a jewel of an ambassador," he said. Then suddenly he pushed the whole subject away with an airy wave of his hand. "You are here on professional business, I suppose. Are you going to write up my picturesque appearance in my barren cell, or do you want my opinion of Yeats' poetry or on the defects of the jury system? By Jove, old man, you'd have to hunt hard to ask for something that I wouldn't give you."

"I am very glad you gave me the opportunity," said Lyon simply. Then he hesitated. He had an instinctive feeling that, as a mere ambassador, he must not presume to assert any personal interest in the situation, and yet he felt there was something which Lawrence might consider important in the old gentleman's revelation. Of course he could not repeat the whole of that conversation! That, luckily, was not necessary. But if he might venture on the friendly interest which he really felt, he must mention one item.

"I met Miss Wolcott's grandfather," he said, with the casual air of one who is filling in a conversational break. "He inquired if you were in town, — said he had expected you to call Monday

night, but supposed perhaps you had not done so, because you knew Miss Wolcott was to be out."

Lawrence looked up sharply.

"He said that, did he?"

"Yes. He seemed to be cherishing a grievance because she had gone out without notifying him, and because she let herself in by the side-door when she returned at ten o'clock."

Lawrence looked at him with concentrated gaze.

"I wonder to how many people he has confided his grievance," he said slowly. "He doesn't see very many people, and he is apt to forget things in time. We'll have to hope for the best. Here's to his poor memory!"

"If the subject isn't revived! But I gathered that he doesn't read the papers."

"No, his eyesight is really very bad, though of course he won't admit it. If worst came to worst, — I mean if his testimony came into the case, — it would not be difficult to cast some uncertainty on the time. He couldn't read the face of a watch, I feel sure."

"Then here's to his poor eyes," said Lyon with a smile.

And Lawrence laughed and shook hands with him with a tacit acceptance of his partisanship that bound Lyon to him more strongly than any formal words could have done. Indeed, when Lyon went away he considered himself pledged, heart and soul, to Lawrence's cause. No henchman of the

days of chivalry ever felt a more passionate throb of devotion to an unfortunate chieftain than this quiet, self-effacing young reporter felt for the brilliant and audacious man who was so evidently determined to play a lone hand against fate. This feeling was in no respect lessened by the possibility which he had been forced to consider that Lawrence might in fact be much more nearly involved than he had at first supposed. Men had been swept away from the moorings of convention and morality by the passions of love and hate ever since the world began, and Lawrence, for all his breeding and gentleness, was a man of vital passions. No one could know him at all and fail to recognize that. And he had loved Miss Wolcott and hated Fullerton; that was clear. But the question of whether he was, in fact, guilty or innocent, was merely secondary. The first question for Lyon, as for any true and loyal clansman it must always be, was merely by what means and to what extent he could serve him. And that settled once and for all the question of his own obligation to speak. The cause of justice might demand that he should give Howell a hint as to important witnesses. The language in which he mentally consigned the cause of justice to the scaffold was not exactly feminine, but the sentiment behind it was peculiarly and winningly feminine. If Lawrence wanted this thing, he should be allowed to have it, and the cause of justice might go hang.

At the same time, he was absorbed in a constant speculation on the facts of the case. The little light he had gained only made the darkness more visible. If Lawrence had indeed struck the fatal blow, how had it come about? Had he encountered Fullerton and Miss Wolcott together, and had there been a sudden quarrel with this unexpected termination? Then Miss Wolcott was the sole witness, and Lawrence's injunction to silence was easy enough to understand. That was of course the most obvious explanation, though on that theory it was hard to understand Lawrence's amazement when his cane had been produced at the inquest. On the other hand, if Lawrence's tale was true about his being behind Lyon on Hemlock Avenue, then his persistent evasion of all really conclusive proof of his alibi must be due to his determination to shield Miss Wolcott. Did he think it possible that she herself was the murderer? It was necessary to consider even that possibility. Lyon recalled the girl's sphinx-like composure, and he was by no means sure that it might not cover passional possibilities which could, on occasion, burst into devastating force. She was the sort of woman who would be quite equal to taking the law into her own hands if she felt it expedient to do so. Lyon knew the brooding type. If, for instance, she loved Lawrence, and if she felt that Fullerton stood between them, and particularly if she had any cause for bitterness against Fullerton

which would make her feel that in slaying him she was an instrument of justice, — well, tragedies were happening every day that were no more difficult of belief. She was not an ordinary woman; and when a woman breaks through the lines of convention she will go farther than a man. She had had a grudge against Fullerton, she had prayed for his death, she had been on the spot when he was killed. Whether she struck the blow herself or not, it was clear that her connection with the affair was intimate. If she was the woman Donohue had seen in Fullerton's company when they left the Wellington together, it would seem that she had been agitated to the point of sobbing aloud as she walked beside him. Any emotion that could reduce Miss Wolcott to sobs must have been powerful. All this Lawrence knew as well as Lyon, but it was conceivable that he knew more. Had he been a witness of the murder, if not an actor in it? How had his cane come to be on the spot unless he had been there himself? And the fact that Fullerton's overcoat had been turned seemed to indicate a deliberate attempt at concealment which did not accord with the girl's frantic flight from the spot. Some one else had been involved in that, some one with steady nerves and a cool head. In all the uncertainty, the one thing clear was that Lawrence had been so concerned about protecting the girl that he had almost seemed to invite rather than to repel suspicion.

Whether the Grand Jury would consider the evidence against him as strong enough to warrant an indictment remained to be seen, but if it did not, it would not be because of any efforts on Lawrence's own part. That unfortunate public quarrel in the Court House was a serious complication, and since the murder that point had been much before the public. Half a dozen different versions had been given by as many positive eye-witnesses. That they differed so widely in detail only made the public more certain that there must have been something very serious in it. The wiseacres who had prophesied that something would come of it took credit to themselves.

It was merely from curiosity, and with no idea of the discovery he was about to make, that Lyon went to Hemlock Avenue that evening at ten to retrace the course he had taken the night before. He wanted to fix the scene in his memory definitely, and to take note of what he had seen and what he might have seen if he had looked. He stopped at the place where he had seen the running girl, and looked about. Certainly she had come from Sherman Street, and, cutting diagonally across Hemlock Avenue, had crossed the field of his vision squarely. He shut his eyes for an instant to recall the scene. She ran well, — he could see now that swift, sure flight. Was it possible that the statuesque Miss Wolcott could ever forget herself in that Diana-like run? Somehow the picture,

as he now looked at it, was not like Miss Wolcott. It was lithier, quicker, than he could imagine her. Yet there was no question about her running in at the Wolcott house. Stay, was he so sure of that? He had not seen her enter. She had simply run in by the walk that led to the side door. Could she have gone through the Wolcott yard on her way elsewhere? If the running girl was not in fact Miss Wolcott, then his whole theory fell down. Trusting to luck and the inspiration of the moment if he should be challenged, Lyon coolly followed the concrete walk past the side door into the Wolcott back yard. It was a sixty foot lot, running back about a hundred feet. At the front it was unfenced and open to the street, but at the back and on the two sides back of the rear line of the houses it was enclosed by a close board wall six feet high. By the posts and the clothes lines here, it was evident that the back yard was consecrated to Eliza and wash day. So far as might be seen, there was no gate in the enclosing wall. Was there an alley beyond or did this lot abut on the lot which faced on the next street south, — Locust? Lyon felt that might be an important question, and he went down to the corner of the lot and pulled himself up by his hands to look over the top of the wall. He satisfied himself of two points, — that there was no alley between this lot and the adjoining one, and that the board which he had laid his hand upon

was not firm. He bent down to examine it. It was a broad board near the left corner of the wall. It was fastened to the upper cross-piece of the fence by a single large spike, and the lower end was unnailed. The effect of this was that while it hung straight in its place so long as it was untouched the lower end could be easily swung on that upper spike as a pivot, leaving a triangular aperture at the bottom quite large enough for a slender person to squeeze through. To test it, Lyon pulled himself through, and swung the board back into its place. He found himself in a large enclosed space, boarded in on all sides except the front, where a high wire fence separated it from the street. With a certain astonishment, Lyon recognized his surroundings. He was in the enclosed grounds of Miss Elliott's Private School for Girls on Locust Avenue, — a highly select and exclusive establishment. Was it as easy to get out as to get in? He hesitated a moment before deciding on further explorations, but the trees in the yard gave him the aid of convenient shadows, and he cautiously followed the wall around the lot, trying each board. There were no more secret panels. Everything was as firm as it looked. He had thought to get out by the gate on Locust Avenue, for it somehow touched his dignity to crawl out by the little hole that had admitted him, but to his surprise he found that the wire fence, which enclosed the lot on the front, came up to the house

itself in such a way that no exit could be made on that side except through the house. Moreover the fence was too high to jump, even for him. Emboldened by the fact that the house was as entirely dark as though it were vacant, Lyon made another and even more careful examination of the enclosing wall. There was no break, and he was forced to make his way out, as he had come in, by Miss Wolcott's back yard.

He regained the open street with a tingling pulse. Perhaps his discovery meant nothing, — but perhaps it meant everything. It might enable him in time to tell Lawrence that the running girl was not Edith Wolcott. The sudden recognition of that possibility excited him keenly. Could it be that Lawrence had mistakenly jumped to the same conclusion that he had? Were Lawrence and Miss Wolcott both keeping silence, each to shield the other, while the guilty person made her escape through the sacred precincts of Miss Elliott's select school? He would interview Miss Elliott to-morrow.

CHAPTER VI

IT was two o'clock in the afternoon of the next day before Lyon found it possible to carry out his plan to interview Miss Elliott. As he approached the Select School on Locust Avenue, he noticed a doctor's runabout fastened before the door, and, as he came up, a young physician whom he knew well, Dr. Barry, came down the steps. Lyon had often found it useful to assume a curiosity when he had it not, and he at once seized his opportunity.

"How is your patient?" he asked with an assured air.

"What do you know about my patient?" Barry asked in obvious surprise.

Lyon in fact knew so little that he deemed it advisable to answer this question with another.

"Will she be able to see me?"

"You newspaper men beat the devil! How did you find out she was here? She particularly wanted to keep it quiet. Miss Elliott called me in with as much secrecy and mystery as though her guest were a royalty traveling incog., and here I

find you on the steps ready to interview her for the benefit of the whole public."

"You don't understand," said Lyon quietly. "The only way to keep things out of the newspapers is to take the newspaper men into your confidence. By the way, is her ailment serious?"

"Puzzling. Disordered state of the nerves," said Barry, frowning.

Lyon laughed. "Don't put on professional airs with me."

"That's straight. It looks very much like nervous shock. I don't at all approve of her seeing visitors."

"Then why don't you forbid it?" fished Lyon with curiosity.

"I'm too young and she's too important," laughed Barry as he jumped into the runabout. "I haven't the nerve to give orders to the wife of a multimillionaire." And he drove rapidly off.

Lyon rang the bell with a feeling of exhilaration. He was making progress.

While the neat servant who answered his ring took his card to Miss Elliott, Lyon waited in the reception room and hastily reviewed his facts. The wife of a multimillionaire traveling incog., and suffering from nervous shock. How could he surprise Miss Elliott into giving him her name? In a few minutes Miss Elliott stood before him, looking from his card to him with a severe and discouraging air. It was an air which Lyon had

encountered before when pursuing the elusive interview.

"I am not here in my professional capacity," he said with a disarming smile. "I wanted to make some personal inquiries about your school in behalf of a friend in Cleveland."

Miss Elliott softened. "This is not a very good time to see the school," she said. "This is the Thanksgiving vacation, you know, and the pupils and teachers have all gone home."

"I didn't think of that. When did they go?"

"The term closed last Friday. The pupils all scattered on Saturday. We resume class work next Monday."

"Then you have been practically alone in the building with your servants this week," Lyon said blandly. This was significant. The murder had taken place on Monday evening, and it was a big gain to know that he might eliminate a score of Miss Elliott's pupils from connection with the running girl. It seemed to make the problem much simpler.

"Might I look over the building?" he asked as Miss Elliott responded to his last question with a somewhat chill bow. "My friend will be interested in knowing the general plan of the school rooms."

"I shall be glad to show them to you," said Miss Elliott.

Lyon listened deferentially while Miss Elliott explained the uses of the various rooms through which she conducted him. The building was a large square old-fashioned house, the first floor of which contained Miss Elliott's own suite, several large school rooms, and, in the rear, some rooms into which she did not take him, and to which she vaguely referred as "my resident teachers' apartments." Lyon guessed at once that this was where her distinguished guest was quartered, — a guess which was confirmed when the second story was thrown wholly open to him. He took special note of the window fastenings and saw at once that it would be the simplest thing in the world to throw open a window and slip out into the large inclosed yard.

"Your high wall suggests a convent school," he said with a smile. "Are your young ladies as carefully secluded as that wall would suggest?"

"That is one of the features of the school," Miss Elliott said, somewhat primly. "We aim to give the care and guidance of a home to our pupils. During lesson hours and at all other hours, they are safeguarded, and are never unattended. We know exactly where they are all the time, and what they are doing."

"A wise arrangement."

"During the school year, this large yard is our outdoor gymnasium. The girls take their exercise here free from all observation. There is no

entrance to the grounds, except through the house."

"An admirable plan. In fact, your arrangements are all so admirable that I do not wonder at the reputation which your school has achieved. And the social atmosphere is, I know, of the best."

"We are exceedingly particular about whom we admit," conceded Miss Elliott, with modest gratification.

"Oh, I am aware of that, and of your distinguished patronesses. The name of the lady whom you are at present entertaining is alone a sufficient guarantee. Oh, don't be afraid that I am going to put an item about her in the paper! A newspaper man respects confidences, and I understand that she does not wish her presence here to be heralded abroad. In fact, I may say that professionally I am quite ignorant as to her presence here, but personally and privately, — you understand, —" And he smiled intelligently.

Miss Elliott bowed. "Mrs. Woods Broughton is an old personal friend," she said simply. "She used to live in Waynscott, you know, before her marriage. There are so many people here who used to know her that she would have no chance for a quiet rest if it became known that she was here, and she is very much in need of a quiet rest."

Lyon looked sympathetic. "Yes, a nervous

shock I understand from Dr. Barry. I hope she is improving."

"I think she is in better spirits than when she came, though any nervous disturbance is hard to understand."

"Will she remain after the school reopens?"

"Necessarily, for awhile. She is not in condition to travel."

Lyon left the building in so abstracted a state of mind that he fairly ran into a man on the sidewalk. With a hastily muttered apology, he hurried on. The discovery that the mysterious woman was Mrs. Woods Broughton was, in a way, staggering. As well connect any other national celebrity with small local affairs. Mrs. Woods Broughton's name was known throughout the country, not only because of her husband's wealth and position, but because of the more or less romantic circumstances attending her marriage. She had been Mrs. Vanderburg when Broughton met her and fell in love with her, and everybody knew that the divorce which she had procured shortly afterwards had been merely a preliminary to the brilliant wedding which had set the newspapers agog. It had been a very decorous and unsensational divorce, without a breath of scandal, for Vanderburg had been an unknown quantity for so many years that no exception could be taken to the deserted wife's action in securing legal recognition of her practical and actual inde-

pendence. Still, the need of securing a divorce might never have occurred to her if Woods Broughton had not come into her life. Lyon remembered the story in its general outline, though he had forgotten that the scene of it was Waynscott. The papers had been featuring the wedding at the time he began his career as a reporter in Cleveland, and the whole affair had taken on a special and personal interest to him from the fact that about six weeks later he had himself met the divorced husband, Vanderburg, under dramatic circumstances. He had been traveling a long afternoon in Ohio, and had struck up a traveling acquaintance with a clever, cynical, world-worn man in the smoking car. Percy Lyon's experiences at that time had been somewhat limited, and he had never before encountered the particular variety of liveliness which this sophisticated traveler afforded. He had apparently been in all quarters of the globe, and if his tales had something of a Munchausen quality, they were none the less entertaining for that. The interruption of his last tale had been tragic. There had been a sudden grinding of the wheels on the rails, a tearing crash, and then confusion, horrible and soul-shaking. When Lyon began to think consecutively again, he found that he was frantically tugging at the crushed seat which was pinning his companion to the floor of the overturned car. Help answered promptly to his shout, and

they soon had the man out, but he was unconscious and so badly hurt that the physician shook his head gravely.

"Better telegraph for his friends, if you can find out who they are."

Lyon, in the absence of any closer acquaintance, had searched the unconscious man's pockets for a clue to his identity, and in an inner pocket he found an old note-book with the name "William H. Vanderburg" written on the fly-leaf. The name had suggested nothing to his mind at the moment, and while he was looking further for an address, the man's eyes had opened slowly and taken the situation in with full intelligence.

"You have nothing to do with that book," he said harshly. "If it's my name you are hunting for, Enoch Arden will do for my headstone. I have no friends to notify, and you will please me best if you bury me and forget about me, and particularly keep *that* name out of the papers. I have a right —" But the effort was too much. He gasped and fell back dead. Lyon had been so impressed by the stranger's peculiarly commanding personality that he had respected his wish to be left unidentified. He considered that the bare accident that he had stumbled upon the man's real name did not justify him in disregarding the owner's wish to keep it concealed, and he did not change his view when he saw that a bunch of newspaper clippings which had fallen out of

the note-book related to the divorce granted to Grace Vanderburg. Lyon reviewed the situation as fully as it was known to him. Mrs. Vanderburg had secured a legal separation in the courts and had married again. The decree was based on the representation that William H. Vanderburg had deserted his wife and had been unheard of for over twelve years. Whether William Vanderburg had intended to make difficulties or not, Lyon had no means of guessing, but if he had, certainly his death had closed the incident for ever. The unintentional witness slipped the old note-book into his own pocket and allowed the railroad company to bury the body of "One unidentified man."

That was all three years in the past, or thereabouts, and now he had been brought most curiously across the path of that dead man's former wife. Truly, the Goddess of Accident was throwing her shuttle with what almost looked like design. Was his imagination running wild in suggesting to him a possible identity between this woman of uncommon experience, wealth, and social standing, and the woman who had fled in a panic from the scene of Fullerton's murder? He felt that he was in danger of making himself absurd by harboring such a thought for a moment, but with the desire which was characteristic of him to get at the bottom facts, he went directly to the office of the clerk of the Circuit Court.

"I want to verify some dates in connection with that Vanderburg divorce case," he said, to the lounging official in charge. "Would it be possible for me to look at the record?"

"I have the papers right here, as it happens," the clerk answered. "Curious you should call for them. I made a transcript of that case for Warren Fullerton a week or two ago."

"Did you, really?" Lyon exclaimed in surprise. "What did he want it for?"

"Dunno. He was Mrs. Vanderburg's attorney, you know."

"I didn't remember," said Lyon thoughtfully. It was beginning to look interesting. There was, then, an established relation of some sort between Mrs. Broughton and Fullerton. Just what did it mean?

He felt that he was on the way to finding out when he reached his rooms that evening, for he found awaiting him a special delivery letter containing the following somewhat imperiously worded invitation:

"Mrs. Woods Broughton will be greatly indebted to Mr. Percy Lyon if he can call upon her this evening. She appreciates his courtesy in respecting her wish that her visit should not be made a matter of public gossip. He will add to her obligations by giving her an opportunity for a personal interview."

Lyon got into his evening clothes with a jubila-

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tion that does not always accompany an evening call. He felt that the fates were playing into his hands.

CHAPTER VII

LYON was evidently expected, for he was conducted at once to the rooms which had been closed to him in the afternoon, and there he found Mrs. Broughton awaiting him. He was prepared to be interested in the woman whose story had so curiously touched his own experiences, but when he came into her presence he forgot that he was before the woman whose first husband he had buried, and whose second husband was a man heralded by headlines across a continent. He only saw a frail, slight, beautiful woman, with a wistful sweetness in her eyes, propped against high pillows on a couch. She looked so ill, so like a fluttering candle in the wind, that his concern must have betrayed itself, for she smiled at him with an air of reassurance.

“It was kind of you to come so promptly at a stranger’s request,” she said gently. “Miss Elliott told me of your visit this afternoon, and I wanted to thank you for respecting my wish to remain unknown to the general public. I wonder how you came to know?”

“It was mostly an accident,” Lyon murmured.

"I come across a good deal of incidental information, you know."

"You newspaper men are so clever," she said, and Lyon wondered whether his imagination was playing him tricks or whether there really was something like fear lurking in her eyes. Certainly her hands were fluttering with nervousness, and her breath came and went in hurried gasps that meant either extreme weakness or emotion. With an obvious effort that awoke his admiration, she pulled herself together and went on in a stronger voice.

"That was not the reason I had for wishing to see you, however. I wanted to ask you some questions that you, as a newspaper man, could answer better than anyone else; and since you already knew of my presence here, I could speak to you without spreading that insignificant bit of information any further than it has gone already."

"I shall be very happy if I can be of any service," Lyon answered, with more sincerity than usually goes into the polite phrase. He felt, really, that nothing earth could offer would rejoice him more, just then, than to have her ask questions, for nothing would more certainly reveal where her own interests and anxieties lay. But she seemed to find it difficult to begin, for a long pause followed, — a pause which he would not break, and which apparently she could not.

At last she said, with an abruptness that made her voice tense,

"I was very much shocked by that tragedy Monday."

Lyon nodded, and kept his eyes lowered to remind her of his presence as little as possible. But, he wondered, why did she say Monday? If her knowledge of it came through the papers, the shock could not have reached her until Tuesday. And how else could she have known, unless —

"You see, I used to know — Mr. Lawrence," she said.

(Had she meant to say Mr. Fullerton, Lyon wondered, and veered from the name? Since Fullerton had been her lawyer, she certainly had known him, also.)

"That is why," she continued, "I am anxious to learn anything that you can tell me, — anything more significant than the reports in the public prints, I mean."

"There isn't much known. That is the difficulty of the situation. If you read the account of the inquest, you saw that Mr. Lawrence was merely held on suspicion, because the police had not been able to find any one else to hold. Of course it does not follow that they will not discover some other clue."

She listened with tense interest. "The law is terrible," she said with an involuntary shudder. "You never know what it is going to do. It is

like a wild beast, waiting to spring. It terrifies me to think of Mr. Lawrence being actually in jail, but — they *will* have to let him go, won't they? He can't really be in any serious danger?"

"The circumstances were sufficient to warrant his arrest. Unless he can clear himself, or unless the real murderer is discovered, his situation is certainly serious."

"I can't bear to think of it!" she cried nervously, pressing an embroidered handkerchief hard against her trembling lips. "Why, Arthur Lawrence always was the very soul of honor. It's horrible to have him involved, —"

"Yes, it is," said Lyon simply.

"Has he a good attorney? If it's a question of getting the very best lawyer in the country to defend him, would it be possible for me — Oh, I have heaps of money, you know, and if it could possibly do anything for an old friend —"

"Did you wish me to make that suggestion to Mr. Lawrence?" Lyon asked.

"I don't know," she said helplessly. "I think I wanted your advice. If Mr. Lawrence is sure to be cleared anyhow, —" she hesitated irresolutely. "Perhaps I would better wait awhile and see how things go," she concluded, as Lyon gave her no help.

"I think the help that Lawrence stands in need of," said Lyon, deliberately, "is not money, but information that will clear up the case."

She started up nervously. "But I couldn't give that. I haven't any information. You didn't think —"

"I was only supposing a case."

"I should like to do something, but I don't know how I can. He has done much for me, without counting the cost to himself. I have reason to be grateful to Mr. Lawrence. Will you remember that, and if anything suggests itself to you that would give me an opportunity to do anything for him, will you let me know?"

"Is it your intention to stay here for some time, then?" Lyon said.

She looked helpless and undecided. "I — don't know. I didn't mean to, but I don't feel very strong. I think I may stay for a week longer. I need rest. I have had some distressing news. It has unnerved me."

"This is a restful place," Lyon said sympathetically. "It was fortunate that Miss Elliott's school was closed this week. You have been as quiet and undisturbed here as though you had been quartered in a rest-cure sanitarium, haven't you?" He had put the rather too personal question with intention, meaning to see how she would take it, but he was not prepared for its effect upon her. She looked at him with startled nervousness and laughed, — and then continued to laugh and laugh as though he had made an irresistible joke. Lyon waited for her to recover her poise, and it

was not until her wild laughter changed suddenly to wilder sobs that he realized she was in the grip of nervous hysteria. He hastily rang the bell and then went out into the hall himself to meet the slow-answering maid and send her whirling back to bring Miss Elliott.

"Shall I telephone for Dr. Barry?" he whispered, when Miss Elliott had come and taken the still sobbing woman in her arms.

"Yes, do, for goodness' sake. What in the world started her?" Miss Elliott answered, distractedly. The situation was so alien to her rule-regulated life that she looked bewildered by it.

Lyon neglected the second part of her speech to attend to the first. He found the telephone in the hall, and got Barry.

"Hello, Dr. Barry. This is a message from Miss Elliott. She wants you to come at once to see Mrs. Broughton."

"That you, Lyon?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with Mrs. Broughton?"

"She's crying and laughing together in a way to make your blood run cold. For heaven's sake, hurry along."

"If you have been upsetting that woman, I won't answer for the consequences," exclaimed Barry, with indignant emphasis.

"Then get over here as quick as you can and take it out of me afterwards," retorted Lyon,

hanging up the receiver. He went back to Mrs. Broughton's door. The sobbing had ceased, and after waiting a moment Lyon caught one of the excited servants and sent her in to Miss Elliott with an inquiry and an offer of service. She answered that there was nothing more he could do, so he quietly let himself out of the house.

He had gone several blocks from the school when he became aware of the fact that a man on the opposite side of the street seemed to be keeping an eye on his movements. Was he himself an object of interest to someone connected with the case? He was conscious now that he had seen the man across the street without heeding him when he stepped out from the house, and he recalled the fact that he had fairly stumbled into the arms of a man in that same neighborhood when he came out in the afternoon. Possibly the man perceived himself observed, for he quickened his pace. But at the end of the block he crossed the street and came back on Lyon's side. Lyon looked sharply at him as they passed each other, but the man's face was indistinguishable in the shadow. It was only after he had passed on that Lyon remembered that the light from the street lamp must have fallen full upon his own face. Well, he had no reason to mind being identified.

When Lyon reached his rooms he proceeded to put into effect an ingenious little scheme that had occurred to him. He studied Miss Elliott's

catalogue till he found the name of a pupil from a town where he had some personal acquaintance. He then wrote an appealing letter to an influential woman whom he knew there, telling her of his lonely state as a stranger in a strange city, and begging that if she knew a Miss Kitty Tayntor of her own town who was attending Miss Elliott's school in Waynscott, she send him forthwith a letter of introduction.

CHAPTER VIII

CONSCIENCE and interest in the "case" combined prompted Lyon to call upon Dr. Barry early the next day and inquire how Mrs. Broughton was.

"Just about as ill as she can be," the doctor answered grimly. "I had left special orders that she was not to see anyone. What in thunder did you mean by forcing yourself upon her in that way?"

"I didn't. She sent for me."

"Sent for you? What for?"

"She wanted to ask me something about the Fullerton case."

"Are you serious?"

"Certainly."

"And was that what you had been talking about when she had that attack?"

"Yes, in general. She used to know Lawrence, and what she particularly wanted to know was whether his situation was serious. She did not seem hysterical at all, or even specially nervous, until she went off suddenly at the end into that awful laughter."

"Well, if she should send for you again, you are not to go without letting me know first. Frankly, I consider that her reason is trembling in the balance, and the greatest care will be necessary to pull her through the crisis safely. I have a trained nurse with her now, and she is not to be allowed to see anyone till the danger point is passed."

"I wish you would let me know when I may safely call upon her."

"That won't be for some time yet. What do you want to see her about?"

"She entrusted me with a commission. I want to report upon it."

"She probably won't remember it when she recovers. I don't consider that she was really responsible for what she may have said or done yesterday. She has had some sort of nervous shock that has shaken her entirely out of the normal. It will take a long time before she is herself."

"When did she call you in?" Lyon asked abruptly.

"Tuesday afternoon. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered how you came to know so much. Good-by."

He went away with a sense of bafflement. That Mrs. Broughton was in some way connected with the tragedy, and that the nervous shock from which she suffered dated from that evening,

seemed to have been made so patent that he had all the eagerness of the hunter to run the facts down. And yet to do so under the present circumstances was almost brutal. How could he raise a breath of suspicion against a woman who was trembling on the verge of mental derangement as a consequence of what he had seen or had possibly had a share in? And yet if the truth would serve to clear two innocent people from suspicion, could he justify himself in not speaking? More and more he felt inclined to entertain the idea that the woman he had seen running across the street was Mrs. Broughton. If he could but establish this as a fact and so clear Lawrence's mind of the conviction that it was Miss Wolcott, he felt that Lawrence would probably be able to clear himself of the shadow under which he rested without difficulty. Brutal or not, he must get the facts, — quietly if possible, but he must get them. It would be more brutal to let the innocent suffer than to fix the crime upon the guilty, however sympathetic he might feel toward the latter. He determined to go quietly on and gather what information he could without at present sharing his suspicions with anyone. With this end in view he went to the Wellington, Fullerton's home.

He hunted up the elevator boy in the first place, and soon established a thoroughly satisfactory understanding with him on the basis of some theater tickets.

"Now I want to see how good a memory you have, Johnny. You know that lady who came to see Mr. Fullerton that evening, —"

"Yes, sir, I remember all about her."

"Did you know who she was?"

"No, sir, she kept her veil down all the time. But she was an elegant lady. She had on a dress that swished when she walked, and an elegant muff and coat."

"What were they like?"

"Why, just fur."

"There are lots of kinds of fur. Did you notice particularly?"

"Why, dark fur, I guess," Johnny answered hopefully. "Yes, elegant black fur."

Lyon saw he was improvising and passed on to another point.

"What time did she come?"

John brightened into positiveness. "Half past seven. I know that for sure, because that was when I told her she would be apt to find him, and so I was watching out for her when she came."

"Oh, then she had been here before?"

"Yes, she came twice in the afternoon, but Mr. Fullerton was out. I told her she would find him for sure if she came at half past seven, because he wouldn't be going out in the evening before eight, but she was so anxious that she came again about four o'clock. I knew he wouldn't be here then, and it was just as I said."

"When you told her to come at half past seven, didn't she look at her watch?"

"Yes, she did!"

"What kind of a watch was it?"

"A little watch. I don't remember. But, gee, it was on a dandy chain all right!"

"I don't believe you remember the chain any better than you do the watch."

"Yes, I do. It was a long chain that went around the neck and she wore it outside of her coat, dangling, with a purse at the end. The watch was inside the purse. The chain was gold, with red stones in it here and there, and they sparkled like anything."

Lyon recognized the fidelity of the description. Mrs. Broughton had worn a long chain of enameled gold links, set with rubies magnificent enough to have excited the admiration of even less appreciative observers than an elevator boy. It would be crediting too much to coincidence to suppose that there could be another chain of so unusual a style worn by someone else that day.

"Had that lady ever been here before?" he asked.

Johnny was positive on that score. "No, she was a stranger. The first time she came, early in the afternoon, she didn't know where his room was, and I took her around and rang the bell for her myself. I never seen her before. She had a funny way of talking, — 'Misteh Fullehton,'"

— and he mimicked the soft evasion of the “r” that had characterized Mrs. Broughton’s speech.

“Good for you, Johnny. You are doing well. Now do you know when she went away?”

“She and Mr. Fullerton went out together about eight o’clock.”

“Now think carefully about this. Was there any other lady who came to see Mr. Fullerton that afternoon?”

“No.”

“Or in the forenoon or in the evening? Any time at all on Monday?”

Johnny looked a little uncertain of his ground.

“They don’t always say who they want. They just say ‘Second floor,’ or ‘fifth,’ you know. And sometimes they walk up.”

“Then if there was anyone else who came to see Mr. Fullerton that day, you wouldn’t know about it?”

Johnny dived into his memory.

“There was another lady here that evening, but I don’t know who she wanted to see. She didn’t say.”

“When did she come? What do you know about her?”

“She came just after the lady with the long chain, because I met her in the hall as I came back from ringing Mr. Fullerton’s bell. I thought she was going to the Stewarts’ apartment because there isn’t anyone else at that end of the

hall except the Stewarts and Mr. Fullerton. Then when Mr. Fullerton and the lady came out and went down together, this other lady was in the hall again. I held the elevator for her, but she turned her back and I went down."

"Did you take her down later?"

"No, she must have walked down."

"Can you describe her? Did you see her face?"

"No, she had a veil on."

Lyon inwardly anathematized the feminine exponent of wearing veils.

"Can't you remember anything about her?"

"I didn't see her close," he said apologetically.

"Have you told anybody else about Mr. Fullerton's visitor, Johnny?"

"Mr. Bede was here, asking me all about her the next day."

"Did you tell him the same things you have told me?"

"I didn't tell him about the chain. I didn't think about her looking at her watch until you reminded me."

"Oh, well, that isn't important," said Lyon, carelessly. "Did you mention the other lady to Mr. Bede?"

"No. Was she a-comin' to see Mr. Fullerton, too?"

"Not that I know of. What made you notice her, by the way?"

"She was a stranger. Most people that come here I know."

"You've done very well, Johnny. Now I want to see the janitor. What's his name?"

"Mr. Hunt."

He proceeded to look up Mr. Hunt, and preferred his request that he be allowed to inspect the rooms of the late Mr. Fullerton, but he found that functionary disposed to make the most of the temporary importance which the tragedy had conferred upon him.

"Them rooms is locked up. The public ain't admitted. The police has took the key."

"But you have a duplicate key, you know."

"And what if I have?"

"Why, you could let me in for half an hour."

"What for should I do that? This ain't no public museum, and I ain't no public Information Bureau to answer all the fool questions that people as ain't got nothing else to do can think of asking."

"I dare say that people have been imposing on you," said Lyon, with that serious and sympathetic air which served him so well on occasion. "But that's the penalty which you have to pay for being a man of importance. I like to meet a man of your sort. You're not the kind to let every curiosity seeker in. But this is different. You know I am writing this case up for the *News* and I think I'll have to have your picture for the

paper, with a little write-up. No reason why you shouldn't get something out of all this. You let me into those rooms for half an hour, and I'll see that you have a notice that your wife will cut out and frame."

He had his way in the end, of course, and Hunt, grumbling but gratified, took him up by the back stairs, admitted him, and locked him in, with the warning that he would come personally to let him out in half an hour.

Left alone, Lyon looked about him with a great deal of curiosity and interest. Fullerton was a sufficiently important person in himself to give interest to his rooms, apart from the accident that a mystery had settled down upon his death. And these were not the conventional rooms of the average well-regulated and commonplace man. There was a mingling of oriental luxury and slovenliness, of extravagance and threadbare carelessness, that was a curious index to the owner's mind. The first room was evidently a combined study and lounging room, for it contained a revolving book-case filled with law books, a large table with papers and books spread promiscuously upon it, a couch, several luxurious easy chairs, a curious oriental cabinet high upon the wall, a dilapidated rug in which Lyon caught his foot, and a table with all the paraphernalia of a smoker. The feature of the room that especially attracted his attention, however, was the pictures. These were

not of the character that one would have expected to find in a lawyer's private study. Instead of the portraits of jurists and law-givers, the walls were adorned with pictures of ballet girls of varying degrees of audacity. Some were so extreme that Lyon was distinctly startled. From the pictures, his eye wandered to the book-case at the head of the couch. No law books here, where he threw himself down to smoke at his ease, but novels, French and English, at least equalling the pictures in audacity. Evidently Fullerton had not had the tastes or tendencies of a Galahad. He could hardly have received his clients in this tell-tale room. Yet the open law books on the table indicated that he did occasionally do some studying here. Lyon was struck with the title of the first book he saw, and still more so when he found that of the half dozen lying open or with markers in them on the table, all dealt with the same subject, — divorce. The reason seemed clear when he picked up the file of legal papers on the table and found them to be a complete transcript of the Vanderburg divorce case. Evidently, for some reason or other, that matter had been uppermost in his thoughts of late. As he put the papers down, a filmy, crumpled-up handkerchief on the table caught his eye. It called to his mind the handkerchief which Mrs. Broughton had pressed to her lips the evening before to conceal their nervous trembling, and he was not sur-

prised, when he unfolded it, to find the initials "G. B." woven into the delicate embroidery.

"Well, what do you make of it?"

The amused voice from the bedroom door made Lyon start, for he had supposed himself entirely alone. He spun about and faced a quiet little man, who was regarding him with a rather satiric interest.

"Hello!" he said. "I didn't know you were there."

"You were not supposed to," the other man retorted. "You are not supposed to be here yourself, you know. Are you trying your hand at amateur detective work?"

"I'm looking for material for a lively story," said Lyon, with his most ingenuous air. He had at once recognized Bede, a detective connected with the police force. Of course he had known that the police would be working on the case, but the actual presence of this shrewd-eyed, silent detective gave him a feeling akin to panic. Could Bede read his thoughts and tear from him the secret he was most anxious to guard, — Miss Wolcott's connection with the affair? It was absurd to think so, and yet the idea made him absurdly nervous. He thrust the thought down to the bottom of his mind and faced Bede with a blank aspect. "Help me out, can't you? Give me some interesting bits to work up for the public. What have you discovered so far?"

Bede laughed softly. "For the public?" He came over to the table and picked up the handkerchief which Lyon had thrown down. "You were interested in this, I noticed. Have you any idea who G. B. is?"

"I am a stranger in Waynscott," said Lyon casually. "Besides, my circle of acquaintances would hardly coincide with Mr. Fullerton's, I fancy."

"Oh, Fullerton had more than one circle of acquaintances. He was engaged to be married a few years ago to a young lady belonging to one of the most eminently respectable families of Hemlock Avenue. Ah, you knew that, I see, though you are a stranger in Waynscott."

"I think I have heard it mentioned," said Lyon carelessly, though his heart shook to think he had unconsciously betrayed so much. "One hears all sorts of rumors about the man."

"For instance — ?" Bede asked politely.

"Oh, nothing that would be news to you. By the way, what theory have you to offer in regard to his coat being on wrong side out?"

"What do you make of it yourself?"

"Nothing. I'm entirely at sea."

Bede smiled a little and dropped his guarded air. "Well, he didn't turn it after he was hit, that's evident. Death was practically instantaneous. And the girl didn't turn it, —"

"The girl?"

"The woman you saw running across the street."

"Oh!"

Bede did not smile at the startled monosyllable. He only took quiet note of it, and went on without a break,

"— because a woman wouldn't touch a man who had been struck dead at her feet in the street. She would simply run away at once."

Lyon nodded attentively.

"And the man wouldn't have had time to do it after the girl ran away, because you were so near that you would have seen him if he had lingered in the neighborhood. He must have disappeared almost immediately."

"Not very gallant of him to run off in an opposite direction and let the girl shift for herself."

"Oh, I don't know. The girl had to get out of the way, and alone, as soon as possible. Besides, the man may not have run off in an opposite direction. He may simply have jumped off into that low, vacant lot until the gathering of a crowd gave him a chance to get away without being conspicuous." He was watching Lyon closely, but that young man's surprise was too genuine to be mistaken. "Therefore, to return to the question of the coat," he continued, "it is pretty clear that he must have turned it himself."

"But why?"

"As a disguise. To escape being recognized

by a young woman who had seen him in a black coat a very short time before. It is possible that he trusted too much to the disguise and so came too near, and so provoked the quarrel which ended so fatally. Even a mild-tempered man doesn't like to be spied upon when he is, we may assume, making love on his own account."

"It seems to me you are assuming that Lawrence killed him, and then building up a scene to fit that theory," said Lyon hotly.

"What makes you think I am assuming it was Lawrence? — Because I suggested he was making love on his own account?"

Lyon felt that he had been trapped. "Well, aren't you assuming it to be Lawrence?" he asked bluntly.

But Bede was never blunt.

"At any rate, we must assume that it was a man who struck the blow."

"Why must we?"

"A woman doesn't kill in the open, even where she hates. She has the cat nature. She strikes from ambush, unless attacked. And she doesn't carry a man's cane, even for purposes of defense, much less for purposes of offense."

"There's one point about that cane business that I wonder whether you noticed," said Lyon, thoughtfully. "Lawrence swore that he had it in the State Law Library a few days ago, because he remembered poking a book down from a high

shelf with it, — which is as characteristic of Lawrence as it must have been bad for the book. But he couldn't swear that he took it away with him, because he got into a dispute with Fullerton and he doesn't remember what he did. Now, isn't it possible, and even probable, that being excited by that discussion he walked off without his cane, and that Fullerton, seeing he had forgotten it, picked it up and carried it off, meaning to return it, and then forgot about it, and then, either intentionally or absent-mindedly, carried it with him that fatal Monday night on his walk? That would explain how Lawrence's cane got to be there, without involving Lawrence."

Bede had listened with the closest attention. "That is a very ingenious theory," he said thoughtfully. He walked back and forth across the room a couple of times, revolving it in his mind. "It is certainly a plausible explanation. Fullerton's antagonist may have wrested the cane from his own hand and struck him with it, as you very cleverly suggest. But I don't see that it alters the essential elements of the case."

"Not if it removes Lawrence's connection with the cane?"

"The cane is not a vital point. As you have ingeniously demonstrated, it would be possible to explain it away. The essential point is somebody's antagonism to Fullerton. A casual stranger does not walk up and hit him a blow of that

nature, either with his own cane or with one snatched from the hand of his victim."

"A man of Fullerton's character would be sure to have enemies," said Lyon, argumentatively.

"But not all of his enemies would be roused to murderous fury to see him in company with a particular young lady."

In spite of himself, Lyon started. "Then you think you have identified the young lady?" he asked.

Bede was watching him closely, with a hint of a lurking smile.

"You don't ask with whom we have identified her? Quite right. Of course I couldn't tell a representative of the press. But I don't mind saying that we have theories as to her identity."

Lyon's heart sank. "Based on what facts?" he asked, doggedly.

"Oh, all that will come out in due time. I'll ruin my professional reputation if I let you lead me on to gossip any more." His serious manner contradicted the hint of irony in his eyes, but Lyon guessed that the eyes came nearer to telling the truth. "By the way, Mr. Lyon, how did you get into these rooms?"

"Oh, I'm in the habit of getting in where I want to go."

"Good for you. But I'll have to instruct Hunt as to his duties. You won't get in so easily the next time."

And Lyon fully admitted the truth of that statement the next time that he did get into those rooms.

CHAPTER IX

LYON was distinctly nervous when he got away from Bede and had time to reflect on their conversation. Two things were evident, — that Bede knew about Fullerton's former relation with Miss Wolcott and that he suspected Lyon of knowing more of the situation than the miscellaneous public. Was it possible that he was trying to connect Miss Wolcott with the woman who had called upon Fullerton that evening and had gone out with him? Lyon was satisfied in his own mind that the woman was Mrs. Broughton, but Bede was certainly justified in entertaining the other hypothesis, since he knew nothing about Mrs. Broughton. Would he give his hypothesis to the public? That was exactly what Lawrence had been so anxious to prevent that he had refused to clear himself of the charge of murder, — if, as Lyon believed, he was really not implicated. Was his sacrifice to be for nothing? Lyon saw, at any rate, that he himself must be wary in his movements, since it was evident that Bede was thoroughly alive to as much of the situation as he knew.

He had received a note from Howell, Lawrence's lawyer, asking him to call at his office, and he turned in that direction now. His way, however, took him past the jail, and he took the opportunity to carry out the scriptural injunction to visit those in prison. Poor Lawrence must need a little cheering up.

But poor Lawrence greeted him with a gayety that did not suggest the need of sympathy. Indeed, his eyes were dancing with triumph.

"Do you see my flowers, old man?" he cried jubilantly.

A huge bunch of long-stemmed roses, still in the florist's box, was filling the cell with color and fragrance.

"Who sent them?" asked Lyon suspiciously.

"Devil a card or a scrap of writing with them."

"Oh, then it's merely because you have become a celebrity," said Lyon, indifferently. "Silly women are always sending flowers to the principals in any murder case."

"Bad luck to you, you're jealous," cried Lawrence. "If you are going to slander my roses after that fashion, you can go, — go and get me a dictionary of the flower language. I want to find out what American Beauties mean, — when they come without a card."

"I'd like to know myself," said Lyon, taking note of the florist's name on the box.

Lawrence looked at him with mischievous eyes,

that still were dancing with happiness. "Oh, but you are slow of imagination, Lyon," he said, softly.

Lyon concluded that he was not needed at that moment as a cheerer of those in prison, so he got away, and hunted up Howell's office in a tall office building down town. He was taken into the lawyer's private office, where he found Howell with his hands behind his back, staring moodily through the window into a dingy court, instead of deep in his books as a lawyer is supposed to be. There was exasperation and protest in every line of his figure. He turned to nod to Lyon without relaxing his gloom.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Lyon. Sit down. I asked you to call in connection with this case of Lawrence's."

"Yes."

"Have you any influence with him?"

"I doubt it," said Lyon, with a smile. "I don't think that he allows many men to exert an influence upon him."

"At any rate, you are a friend of his?"

"Most certainly, — so far as I am concerned. I am rather too new a friend to feel that I have much right to claim the title."

Howell regarded him frowningly though with what was evidently intended for good-will.

"I think you will understand me, Mr. Lyon, when I say that a more pig-headed, exasperating,

obstinate client never fell to my lot. He doesn't remember. He can't say. What I need in preparing my defense is not a law library so much as a kit of burglar's tools. I have got to break into his mind somehow. He is hiding something. Do you know what it is?"

Lyon reflected that Bede had not asked that question. Bede had known! He must still keep faith with Lawrence, who had trusted him; but was it not possible to help Lawrence against his will through this lawyer? He picked his way carefully.

"I don't really know very much, Mr. Howell. I guess at some things, and I shall be glad to lay my little knowledge before you. But first, tell me, is Lawrence's situation really dangerous?"

"Yes," said Howell tersely. "You see, an alibi is out of the question. He has admitted that he was in the neighborhood. Donohue's testimony shows that he might easily have been on the very spot. Certainly he was not far from it. Yet he offers no explanation as to what he was doing there. That Fullerton could have been struck down — there must have been some sort of an altercation — and Lawrence neither see nor hear anything, is certainly curious. That his cane should have been found on the spot is certainly unfortunate. That he should have publicly slapped Fullerton's face that morning is the devil's own luck. Frankly, Mr. Lyon, unless I can

in some way discover the actual facts of that night's proceedings, the prospects for clearing Lawrence are not cheerful. Of course, the facts may not help him, — but if that is the case it is even more important that I should know them. I can't work in the dark. Now, do you know, yourself, what Lawrence was doing that night?"

"No."

"You didn't see him?"

"Not until the crowd had gathered."

Howell looked disappointed. "I hoped that possibly you might be able to give me the facts that he is withholding."

"Isn't it possible that he is withholding nothing, — that there is nothing to withhold?"

"It is possible, but if that is the situation, it is a malicious conspiracy on the part of fate to trap an innocent man. It will be difficult to make a jury believe he is as ignorant as he wants us to think. No, as far as I can see into the situation, our only hope is that there is a woman in the case and that we can work the jury for emotional sympathy." He looked keenly at Lyon.

"You may think it a wild notion," said Lyon, "but I have an idea that possibly there is a woman in the case, though Lawrence doesn't know anything about her. I was in Fullerton's rooms at the Wellington this morning, —"

"How did you get in?"

"Blarneyed the janitor. On the table I found

a handkerchief that is the mate of one I have seen in the hand of Mrs. Woods Broughton."

"Well?"

"On the table was a transcript of the divorce proceedings in the case of Grace Vanderburg v. William H. Vanderburg. You know, of course, that Grace Vanderburg is now Mrs. Woods Broughton."

Howell nodded.

"There were a number of books on divorce on the table, as though he had just been looking up the subject, — or discussing it with a client. You know Fullerton was Mrs. Vanderburg's attorney."

"You are leading up to something."

"This. The elevator boy gave me a more particular description of the woman who left the Wellington with Fullerton that evening than Donohue was able to give. I feel sure that woman was Mrs. Broughton."

"Mrs. Broughton is not in Waynscott."

"Yes. She is staying with Miss Elliott on Locust Avenue."

"But the papers have not mentioned it. Are you sure?"

"She is very quiet, — under the care of Dr. Barry, and suffering from a nervous shock which dates from Monday night."

Howell's foot tapped nervously upon the floor.

"But this is amazing, if not incredible. How do you come to know it, — or think you know it?"

"I have seen and talked with Mrs. Broughton."

"You!"

"Yes. She sent for me to ask for information about Lawrence. She said she had been distressed by the news of the murder, and as Lawrence was an old friend she was anxious to learn what danger he stood in, — if I could tell her anything more than the reports in the papers. That's about all."

"All!" exclaimed Howell, excitedly. "What more would you want, in the name of wonder? The woman who was in Fullerton's company —"

"That's merely my guess, you remember. But the elevator boy described a chain she wore, and her manner of speaking very accurately."

"When did you see her?"

"Last night."

"You must take me to her immediately. Here you have wasted hours —"

Lyon shook his head. "Dr. Barry has forbidden her seeing anyone. He fears serious nervous disturbance, — mental derangement, in fact. She has evidently had a severe nervous shock."

"Does Dr. Barry know what you have told me?"

"No."

"Does anyone know?"

"No."

"Not even Lawrence?"

"No. I didn't know just what effect it might have upon — his policy of silence. In fact, I didn't know how to proceed farther, until I had consulted you."

Howell smiled grimly. "I am glad you allowed me some share in handling the matter. From the way you have been going on, I didn't know but what you were going to take the case out of my hands entirely. Now, how soon can I see Mrs. Broughton?"

"I don't know, but not immediately. I saw Dr. Barry this morning. He thinks her condition serious. I told him I wanted to see her as soon as possible, but he warned me not to attempt it until he gave me leave." And he described the scene he had gone through the evening before, when Mrs. Broughton went into hysterics.

Howell looked serious. "I see. Of course I can't force myself upon a woman in that condition. And until I know exactly what her testimony is going to be, I don't want to have her appear in the case at all. It is possible, of course, that after I have talked with her my chief care will be to have her out of the way of the prosecution. I can't tell *what* I shall do until I have seen her. If only Bede does not stumble upon this, —"

"I came upon Bede in Fullerton's rooms this morning. I don't think he has thought of identifying the woman with Mrs. Broughton."

"Although you have?"

"Well, I had the advantage of knowing that Mrs. Broughton was in town. I don't think Bede does."

"How did you find it out?"

"By a sort of accident. I was at Miss Elliott's School, making some inquiries about the school, and Miss Elliott let it out." Lyon breathed a little more freely when that dangerous question was passed.

Howell tapped his underlip thoughtfully with his long forefinger.

"You have given me a most important suggestion, Mr. Lyon. Of course it may lead up to nothing. Even if Mrs. Broughton was the woman whom Donohue saw with Fullerton, it doesn't follow that she was still with him when the tragedy occurred. Indeed, it is more than unlikely, because if she knew anything about the affair, a woman of her standing and character would have spoken out at once. She would have nothing to fear."

Lyon said absolutely nothing, but Howell, watching him, caught some unspoken thought and turned upon him with swift amaze.

"You don't mean —"

"No, no, no," said Lyon. "I am sure not."

But Howell looked thoughtful. "He was her attorney in that divorce suit, and you say that the table was covered with books on divorce, and she had been there to consult him, as is evidenced by

her handkerchief. If there was anything irregular about that divorce and he knew about it, and threatened to use that knowledge — It is not impossible to believe that Fullerton might resort to blackmail on occasion. He was very hard up and Mrs. Broughton is a very wealthy woman, — so long as her marriage is not impugned. And if we suppose for a moment that that was the situation, it is not difficult to go a step further and imagine that his death would be a great relief to her, — so great that it might have taken the form of a swift temptation. The blow may have been a sudden, desperate impulse, and it would not have been beyond the strength of a woman, even a slight woman. But the means, — the cane? ”

“ It has occurred to me as a bare possibility that Fullerton may have been carrying the cane himself, and that his assailant may have wrested it from him. You remember Lawrence’s testimony that he had the cane in the library a few days before, and that, owing to an excited discussion with Fullerton, he did not remember whether he took it away with him or whether he left it there. Suppose he left it there, and Fullerton picked it up, it might have happened that he had it with him on that evening.”

Howell started to his feet and paced the room in suppressed excitement.

“ It may be utterly fantastic and incredible,” he

said finally, pausing before Lyon and looking at him with abstracted eyes, "but it is the first possible gleam of an outlet that I have seen in any direction. I must follow it up. I must see Mrs. Broughton just as soon as possible. I am walking on a mine until I know what she has to say for herself. It may all amount to nothing. It may be of the most vital importance. Now how can I be sure of knowing the earliest moment that I can risk demanding an interview without danger to her health?"

"I know Dr. Barry."

"But you can't tell Dr. Barry why you want to know. It is important that not the slightest hint of this should reach the other side. Of course Bede may work it out for himself. He is not a fool. Quite the contrary. We have to take our chances on that. But we don't want to help him. And if by chance Mrs. Broughton should have nothing to confess except that she saw Lawrence assault Fullerton, we don't want to help Bede to that bit of testimony. It is quite on the cards that that is what she will have to tell me, too. Have you considered that?"

"I don't think she will," said Lyon slowly.

"Do you happen to have any reason for that assurance? Your theories are interesting, young man. If you have any more of them in reserve, I'd like to hear them."

But Lyon shook his head. "My theory is

based on the assumption that Lawrence really knows no more about the affair than he has told you."

"I hope it may prove so," said Howell, somewhat dubiously. "In the meantime, bear in mind that I must have a chance to see Mrs. Broughton quietly at the earliest possible moment. Good Lord, man, the Grand Jury meets in ten days from now. Now, have you any suggestions as to how that interview can be arranged without notice to the public and without any chance of a slip-up?"

"I have just secured a letter of introduction to one of the pupils in Miss Elliott's School, — Miss Kittie Tayntor," said Lyon. "I thought that it might prove useful in keeping in close touch with the situation."

Howell's gray eyes twinkled appreciatively. "It strikes me that you are wasted as a mere newspaper man. You have talents. Go ahead and improve your acquaintance with Miss Kittie. That is safer than to depend upon Dr. Barry, because he might be biassed. He might think it advisable to get Mrs. Broughton away quietly, without letting you know about her movements. Of course a woman of her prominence can't be lost, but on the other hand, if she wanted to get out of reach, she could make it difficult for us to find her. It is much better that we keep watch on her movements without letting her suspect that fact."

"I'll do my best," said Lyon.

"And that is a good deal," said Howell, with a sincerity that made Lyon flush with pleasure.

When Lyon left Howell's office, he went around to the florist whose name he had noted on the box of roses in Lawrence's room. After selecting a boutonniere and admiring the seasonable display of flowers, he asked casually,

"By the way, Maxwell, who sent those roses to Lawrence, — Arthur Lawrence, you know?"

"I'd like to know myself," said the florist, waking up to sudden interest. "I don't have such an order as that every day."

"Why, what was there unusual about it?"

"Well, hundred dollar bills are unusual in my business, and it isn't often that I get a letter with a hundred dollars in it and no name signed to it, with orders to send flowers till the money is used up and more will be coming."

"That does sound uncommon. I'd like to see that letter, if you have it around."

"Oh, yes, I kept it as a curiosity." He opened a drawer in his desk and threw a letter on the counter before Lyon. Lyon's first glance at it showed him plainly enough that the brief note was written in the same large, angular handwriting that had marked the note which he had himself received from Mrs. Woods Broughton. As he picked it up to examine it more closely, an unfortunate accident occurred. A man who had

entered the shop shortly after Lyon and who had possibly overheard their conversation, had come up close to Lyon's elbow, and now leaned forward suddenly as though to look at the note over his shoulder. His hasty movement upset a vase of flowers on the counter. The vase was broken, the flowers scattered over the floor, and the water poured over Lyon's cuff and hand, as well as over the note which he had just picked up. The man was profuse in his apologies, and supplemented Lyon's handkerchief by his own to remove the traces of the deluge. Somehow in the momentary confusion the note itself was lost sight of, but Lyon had seen enough to satisfy him that this munificent order for flowers was simply another indication of Mrs. Broughton's interest in Lawrence and his situation.

Lawrence had wondered what the roses might mean in the language of flowers. Lyon could not help wondering whether they spelled "Remorse."

CHAPTER X

THE first thing to do was to see Kittie Tayntor. Lyon had received from his kind-hearted friend in Columbus a glowing endorsement, which he had mailed to Miss Elliott, with a formal request that he might be permitted to call upon Miss Tayntor. In reply he had received a polite note, authorizing him to present himself the following Wednesday. This was encouraging, but it hardly prepared him for the more than encouraging reception which awaited him when he had duly sent up his card. A tall girl, with a fluff of light hair and eyes so dazzling that he really could not tell what color they were, came down to meet him with a pretty impetuosity.

“Oh, Cousin Percy! I’m so glad to see you! It took you the longest time to find out I was here, didn’t it? I made up my mind I would never send you word to the end of time! I just thought I’d have a good joke on you when you did come around at last.”

“I — I beg your pardon, —” stammered Lyon.

“Oh, I don’t mind! We’ll make up for lost

time. I have so many things to tell you about home. When were you there last? I know you don't write often, — men never do, Aunt Meg says, — so I don't suppose you know that Cousin Jennie is engaged? To Dr. Whitman. Did you know him? No, I think you were in the east when he was there. We all like him very much."

"I'm afraid you are mista—" Lyon tried to put in, but she swept on, with the charming hurry of a breathless little brook.

"And I want to know all about your work. It must be just awfully interesting to write for the papers. I don't see how you can think of things to say! I told Miss Elliott that maybe you would help me with my compositions."

"I should be delighted, but I must —"

"She said that since you were my cousin," Kitten ran on, with a subtle emphasis, and a momentary widening of her wide eyes, "that she would be very glad to have me submit my compositions to you and get your suggestions. It is very fortunate that you are my cousin. You know if you were not, you wouldn't have been allowed to call on me at all. That's one of the rules of the school."

"Oh!" said Lyon, with sudden illumination. "I didn't know that. I'm afraid I never mentioned our relationship to Miss Elliott. I did not know that it was necessary."

"Oh, I made it all straight. I explained it to

her," Kittie said, clapping her small hands inaudibly, and fairly beaming her joyous thanks upon him.

"Would the rules of the school permit you to go out for a walk with me? If I tread on dangerous ground without knowing it, you will have to put me straight. It is a glorious day, and a brisk walk would do you a lot of good."

"I don't know," Kittie murmured. "Some time, maybe, —"

"No time like to-day," said Lyon, firmly. With his best air he approached the lady who, in the far end of the reception room, had been absorbed in a volume of British Poets. "Would there be any objection to my taking my cousin out for a walk?"

"I think not," the lady said, somewhat hesitatingly.

"Then run up and put on your hat, Kittie," said Lyon, coolly. "I'll guarantee to have her back at any time you set."

"I don't quite know what Miss Elliott would say," hesitated the timid lady, "but I think you'd better be back in half an hour."

Kittie threw her arms around her neck. "You're just an angel, Miss Rose!" And she flew up to her room, while Lyon devoted himself to Miss Rose so successfully that she looked upon young men as a class more hopefully from that hour.



“ SHE STOLE A GRATIFIED GLANCE AT LYON’S STRAIGHT
FIGURE.”

[Page 107.]



"Now, Cousin Kittie," said Lyon, as soon as they were outside.

"You needn't keep that up," she interrupted.

"Yes, I do," he said, firmly. "I mustn't get out of practice for a minute, or I might slip up some time. Now talk fast and tell me all the things that I really have to know."

She shot a shy glance at him under her lashes. "It was awfully nice of you to catch on so quickly."

"It was interesting, but difficult. But you are a courageous girl! Suppose I hadn't caught on?"

"I know! Woudn't it have been awful? Or suppose you hadn't been — nice, you know! But I had to take some chances. You don't know how dreadful it is to stay shut up inside of walls like that, and never to go outside unless we go with one of the teachers, and never to see any callers unless they are relatives. And I haven't any relatives at all except Aunt Meg and Uncle Joe and Cousin Jennie at Columbus, so I never had the excitement of going downstairs to see some one in the reception room, while the girls hung over the banisters to see what he looked like when he went away." She stole a gratified glance at Lyon's straight figure and good clothes. "When Miss Elliott came to tell me about your letter, I was just wild to think that I should have to miss this splendid chance, just because you hadn't said you were a relative, so — so —"

"I see."

"Do you think it was very awful?"

"If it had been anyone else but me, it would have been awful, but since it was I, and since you are never going to do it again for anyone else, —"

"Oh, never, never!"

"I think I was in great luck," said Lyon simply. And certainly the words were well within the limit of his feelings on the subject. He had barely hoped to establish some sort of an entrée to the School. That the Miss Kittie whose name he had selected at random from the catalogue should be so pretty, so funnily absurd, so unusually entertaining, was pure gratuity on the part of Fate. And what a daringly reckless child it was! Modest as Lyon was, he couldn't help recognizing that it was luck for Kittie as well as for himself that it was he and not some one else who had been admitted so confidently to this fascinating intimacy. A dawning sense of responsibility for this irresponsible new cousin made him defer the real object of his inquiry to extend the field of his acquaintance with Kittie herself.

"How long have you been at school here, Kittie?"

"I came last September. Why?"

"Oh, I think I ought to know. Do you like it?"

"Oh, it's rather good fun," she said, cheer-

fully. "We have lots of spreads in our rooms and Miss Elliott has rules about everything, and that keeps us busy. Rules always make me want to go right to work to break them, just to see if I can."

"And can you?" he asked, with interest.

She looked demure. "Oh, maybe there might be some that I don't know about yet that I couldn't break."

"What are some of the rules of the school?" That was a point on which he particularly wished to post himself.

"Oh, everything. Miss Elliott won't ever let me go out walking with you like this again. Miss Rose is a new teacher. She has just come, and she didn't know."

"But I may come and see you?"

"Only on Wednesdays. But that will be quite exciting. There are very few girls who have some one come to see them *every* Wednesday. But maybe some Wednesdays you will be busy?" she added politely. "Of course, if you are busy, I shouldn't expect you to come. Some of the girls sometimes have flowers sent to them."

"I'm glad that's allowed," said Lyon, with an inward smile. He was trying mentally to figure out how he was going to keep in touch with Mrs. Broughton's condition if he was only allowed to visit the school once a week. That would not suit him at all. There was now only a week or eight

days before the meeting of the Grand Jury, and if Mrs. Broughton's information was going to do any good at all, they must have it very soon. He must try to draw Kittie into his scheme at once, while he had this opportunity.

"Kittie, I want you to help me out about something. There is a lady visiting Miss Elliott —"

"Oh, do you know her?"

"I know who she is. And I have met her once."

"Isn't she perfectly beautiful? I should rather be like her than anyone else in the world."

Lyon smiled inscrutably, but his tongue was discreet if his eyes were not always. But instead of explaining to Kittie that Mrs. Broughton, beautiful as she was, could never hope to be as delightful as Miss Tayntor, he held himself strictly to the matter in hand.

"Mrs. Broughton is very ill, and Dr. Barry says that I must not disturb her by talking business. Now, it is very urgent that I should have a chance to talk business with her as soon as she is able to stand it, — at the very earliest moment possible. I was wondering if I could find out through you how she is getting on. I am afraid to trust Dr. Barry, you see. He will want to keep me off, and it may be too late to do any good by the time he is willing. At the same time I don't want to force myself upon her before she really is strong enough to stand it. You understand?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. I'll explain it all to her, and then she can say herself when she wants you to come."

"Are you allowed to go in to see her?" asked Lyon in surprise.

"Every evening. She likes to have me rub her head and put her to sleep."

"Oh, that's very fortunate. I thought no one was allowed to go in at all."

"No one else is. No one even goes into those halls, and we mustn't laugh or talk so that she can hear it. But the first evening when we came back after vacation, I naturally wanted to know who it was in those rooms and why she was shut up with a trained nurse and why we had to keep so specially quiet for her, so I just waited around till the nurse went down to get her supper and then I slipped in. The door wasn't locked, so it was perfectly easy. And there I found the most perfectly beautiful woman I ever saw outside of a book. You can't think how fascinated I was. I knew it was good for my education to see a lot of her, because she had such lovely manners, and I was wild to think they would come and order me out and make a rule that I must never go in again, so I just made myself as interesting to her as I possibly could. I had to hurry a lot because there wasn't much time. The nurse was liable to come back any moment."

"How interesting can you make yourself when

you really give your mind to it?" asked Lyon, with lively curiosity.

"Oh, — interesting *enough*. It worked all right, too, because when the nurse came back, Mrs. Broughton just insisted that I should stay a little longer. She said it did her good, and she would be nervous if they didn't let me stay, and that she liked to have me there, and she got so excited that they got scared, I guess, because the nurse finally said, 'W-e-ll, —' like that, you know, and so I stayed, and I *was* good for her, too, so ever since that they let me go in for an hour in the evening, while the nurse is having her supper."

"Good. Nothing could be better. Then you can let me know the first minute that she is strong enough for me to come and see her, and particularly whether she is planning to go away. Would you be sure to know that?"

"Oh, yes. I'd see. I always see things."

"And you could send me a note?"

Kittie looked doubtful. "Miss Elliott reads all our letters, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"That wouldn't matter, because I could write it so that she wouldn't understand, although it would be perfectly plain to you, but I am not sure she would let me write to you at all. You see, you are a rather new cousin, and if you are going to come to see me every week, —"

"She would think that was enough. I see. Well then, what can we do?"

But Kittie had a plan already evolved. "I know. My room is the corner one at the back of the house, — you can see it from this corner of the street. There, do you see the two windows with the curtains clear up? Well, so long as I leave the curtain in the right-hand window up the way it is now, it means that she is too ill to be disturbed, but if I pull it down she is getting better, and the more I pull it down, the better and stronger she is until when I pull it way down she is quite well. The other window, the one in the corner, will tell about her going away. If I see signs of her getting ready to go, I'll pull it part way down, and if it goes as low as the middle sash it means you must hurry if you want to see her, and when I pull it quite down, she has gone!"

"Kittie, you are a genius!"

"And you don't mind that it is breaking rules, — only they aren't made into rules, because nobody thought that they would be needed? I thought just a little that you didn't quite like it a while ago!"

Lyon laughed. "You are quite right, and I mustn't be superior any more. But it is very important that I should have a chance to see Mrs. Broughton, — important to other people than myself."

She gave him a demure, sidelong glance, and

then dropped her eyes. "Is it about Mr. Lawrence?" she asked, ingenuously.

"You amazing young lady! What do you know about Mr. Lawrence?"

"Mrs. Broughton told me about him."

"Did she?" he asked alertly. "What did she tell you?"

"Oh, she has talked about him a great deal. He was an old friend of hers before she was married, and, just think, she had seen him only the day before all this happened."

"Did she tell you where she saw him, or what they talked about?"

"No. But she is very grateful to him for something he did for her. She says he is like a knight of old. I think if he could know she said that, he would feel proud, don't you?"

Lyon frowned thoughtfully. Mrs. Broughton's sudden sense of gratitude toward Lawrence seemed uncalled for. "What else did she say to you?"

Kittie reflected. "She said that they would never, never hang Mr. Lawrence, because nobody saw him kill Mr. Fullerton, and they couldn't hang him unless somebody swore they saw him. Is that the law?"

"I don't know much about the law, myself."

"And she says that it isn't so bad for him to be locked up for a little while, when they will have to let him go in the end, as it would be for

some one to be hanged. I think that is true, too, don't you?"

In spite of the need he felt to explore her mind, the words on her lips shocked him.

"Mrs. Broughton shouldn't talk to you about such things," he said impatiently.

She lifted astonished eyes to his.

"But then I should never have known anything about it! Miss Elliott doesn't allow us to read the papers ever, and I want to know Life."

"Time enough," laughed Lyon.

"Oh, I'm not a child. I can understand. It has been a great thing for me to know Mrs. Broughton."

"She is a beautiful woman," Lyon conceded, somewhat coldly. Secretly he thought Kittie might have been as well off without that intimacy. But before he left the subject there was one point on which he wanted to get light, if possible, without betraying the point of his interest, — Mrs. Broughton's possible acquaintance with the loose panel in the protecting wall of the school yard.

"Do you know if Mrs. Broughton has been here before?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. She always stops here when she comes to Waynscott. She was one of Miss Elliott's first pupils."

"Then she knows the house and yard, pretty well?"

"Oh, of course."

"By the way, I notice that your back yard is fenced in. There is no way of getting in except by the front door, of course."

Kittie looked at him with surprise.

"When you say 'of course' in that careless way, it makes me think you mean just the opposite," she said, suspiciously.

He had to laugh at her penetration. "Then is there any other way in?" he asked.

She hesitated, and then said with an exaggerated imitation of his own "careless" manner,

"Oh, *of course* not!"

"Does Mrs. Broughton know about it, do you think?"

She pursed up her lips and nodded her head violently.

"She belongs to the Immortal Few Society. It has always been one of the things the Immortal Few learned at initiation."

"Has she spoken of it to you?"

"No."

"No, she wouldn't be apt to," Lyon reflected. Then somewhat violently he changed the subject. "Come, we won't talk about her any more. Tell me about our family, so that I won't make mistakes."

She spent the rest of the time coaching him about his newly acquired relatives, and they parted at Miss Elliot's door with mutual satisfaction.

There is no game so trying to the nerves as a

waiting game. Lyon was cool by temperament and self-controlled from experience, but he found it necessary to call on both his native and acquired composure to enable him to face the situation without wanting to do something, anything, to force Fate's hand. To wait, just to sit still and wait for Mrs. Broughton to recover, while all the time Lawrence was drawing nearer and nearer to the day that would blast his career even if he escaped with his life,—it was nerve-racking. And all the time Bede was working, like a mole in the dark, undermining the wall of silence which Lawrence had thrown up. Heaven knew what he might feel bound to discover for the credit of his profession! It might prove, of course, that Mrs. Broughton had nothing bearing upon the subject to tell, but until he knew that to be the case he would hold the hope that somehow, in some way, she might clear matters up. Yes, he must wait.

And then, as he was dropping off to sleep, he woke himself up to murmur quite irrelevantly,

“Anyhow, I'm glad she didn't say that she would be a sister to me!”

CHAPTER XI

BUT if Lyon had fancied that Fate was doing nothing merely because he had run into a blind alley himself, he soon had reason to suspect that he was mistaken. The manner in which during the next few days he stumbled against some of her threads, and so became more than ever entangled in her weaving, was curiously casual, — but as a matter of fact, most of the happenings of life seem casual at the time. It is only looking back that their connection comes into view, like a path on a far mountain, only to be seen from a distance.

Lyon had allowed himself to jubilate a little over the curtain-code which he had established with Kittie. He felt that it had the justification of being important in itself for the purpose which he and Howell had at heart, but apart from that it was so charmingly personal. The messages might concern Mrs. Broughton, but Kittie would have to give them, — and that little fact was so interesting that if he had not been a young man of much steadiness of purpose, he might have let it eclipse the significance of the message. As it

was, he felt it highly important that he should be able to see those windows very frequently. Suppose Kitty should pull down a curtain and he not know about it for hours! The idea was not to be entertained calmly. Would it be possible for him to get a room in the neighborhood? He had learned in his profession that the world belongs to him who asks for it, so, selecting a house whose back windows must, from their position, command an unobstructed view of Miss Elliott's School, he boldly rang the bell. He had no idea who might live there. The house was on a lot adjoining Miss Wolcott's and, like her house, it overlooked the back windows and the grounds of the School. It was in a position that suited his needs. For the rest, he trusted to the star which had more than once favored his quiet audacity.

His ring was answered by a servant of a peculiarly uncheerful cast of countenance.

"Is your mistress at home?" Lyon asked.

"There ain't no mistress," the woman protested, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, your master, then. Will you take up my card? I want to see him on business."

She took it and departed, with that same querulous air of dissatisfaction with the world in general.

That there was no mistress in the house was very evident, even to Lyon's uninstructed masculine sense. The reception room where he waited

was dusty and musty, bearing unmistakable signs of having been closed for the summer and since left untouched. There was an echoing hollowness about the halls that seemed to proclaim the house uninhabited, in spite of the servant. While Lyon was speculating upon the situation, a thin, dark middle-aged man entered the room silently and yet with an alertness that was noticeable. He looked at Lyon with sharp inquiry — almost, it struck the intruder, with distrust.

“Well?” he said curtly.

“I hope it won’t strike you as cheeky,” said Lyon, “but I called on the bare chance of your having a spare bedroom that you could rent me for a month, — or even less. I think my references would be satisfactory. They are going to paper my rooms at the Grosvenor, and I’ve got to clear out while they are messing around, and I like this part of town, so I just thought I’d see what luck I had if I went around and asked. I’m not exacting —”

“We’re not renting rooms.”

“I know, but as a special matter —”

“Couldn’t think of it.”

“Do you happen to know anyone else in the neighborhood who does?”

“Don’t know anyone.”

“I wish you would reconsider. It would be an accommodation to me.”

“Sorry, but it’s impossible.” The impatience

of the man's tone suggested that the interview had lasted long enough, and Lyon rose reluctantly. He hated to feel that his inspiration had failed him. At that moment, however, the portière which separated the reception room from what appeared to be an equally musty and dusty library in the rear was pushed aside, and another man entered, — a man of impressive bearing and appearance, in spite of the fact that he wore a skull-cap and a long dressing gown and that a pair of large blue goggles hid his eyes. The lower part of his face was covered with a beard and yet Lyon felt at once that here was a man of powerful personality.

"I overheard your request from the next room," he said, in a courteous but positive tone, and bowing slightly to Lyon, — who could not repress a wonder whether that position in the back room had not been taken for the express purpose of overhearing him. "I'm not sure that we cannot accommodate the young gentleman, Phillips."

Phillips looked disapproval and injury in every line of his face, but he said nothing. He had at once fallen into the attitude of a subordinate.

"You are more than kind," said Lyon, eagerly. "I know it's a great deal to ask, — but it would be a great accommodation, and I'd try to make no bother."

"You will have to judge for yourself whether there is a room that you could use. I don't know

much about the house. We have only just moved in ourselves. It was a furnished house, closed for the summer, and the agent let us take it for the time being. I am in town temporarily, having my eyes treated, and I wanted a place where I could be more quiet than in a hotel. My name is Olden. This is my good friend Phillips, who looks after me generally, and thinks I ought not to increase my household. I sometimes venture to differ from him, however. The servant, whom you saw at the door, has undertaken to keep us from starving, and she would undoubtedly be able to care for your room. Now you know the family. Would you care to look at the rooms?"

"Thank you, I should like to very much," cried Lyon gayly.

It was so much better than he had had any possible grounds for expecting that his faith in his star soared up again. This was what came of venturing! And in spite of the curious sensation of talking in the dark which Mr. Olden's goggles gave him, he liked the man. There was dignity and directness in his speech, and his voice was singularly magnetic.

Olden led the way upstairs, moving with the swift confidence of a man of affairs and not at all as an invalid.

"There are four bedrooms on this floor," he said. "Phillips has one of them, and I have one. This large room at the front is unoccupied."

The room was large and attractive, but Lyon was not interested in the view toward Hemlock Avenue! He barely glanced at it.

"Might I see the other room?"

Olden opened the door to a back bedroom which, though clean, was small and in no wise so desirable as the other. But it looked the right way, and on going to the window Lyon saw that Kittie's curtains were both high up.

"This will suit me exactly," he said, eagerly. "May I have this room?"

"You really haven't looked at it very carefully," said Olden, with just the barest hint of amusement in his voice.

"Oh, well, — I — I can see that it will suit me. I shan't be in it very much, you know. I'm connected with the *News*, as you know from my card. I'll be here only at night."

"Yes, it's a pleasant little room. And it has an open view. That large building is Miss Elliott's School, I am told."

"Yes, I know," laughed Lyon. "Fact is, I know one of the young ladies at the school."

"Indeed?" There was surprise and, if it had been possible to believe it, disappointment in Mr. Olden's voice. It was as though he had said, "Oh, is that it?" The blue goggles scrutinized Lyon for a moment before he said, "Well, shall we consider it settled?"

"If you please. When can I come in?"

"Whenever you like. I'll tell Sarah to make the room ready. And I hope, Mr. Lyon," he added, as they went back downstairs, "that you will sometimes join me in a cigar before you turn in. Shut in as I am, unable to use my eyes or to see people, you will be doing me a charity if you will come in and gossip a bit. Will you do it?"

"I'll be glad to," said Lyon, heartily.

"That will more than repay me, if there is any favor to you in our arrangement," the man said with a certain emphasis. He probably was lonely, Lyon reflected, with quick sympathy.

Lyon left the house much elated. When he reached the sidewalk he remembered that he had not asked for a latch-key, and that he was apt to return late. He hurried back to the door. The lock had not caught when he came out and the door stood just so much ajar that he saw Olden and Phillips in the hall, and heard Olden exclaim, with a ring of passion in his voice, "You would have thrown such a chance as that away?"

They both looked so startled, when he made his presence known, that he was swiftly aware that he was the subject of what seemed to have been a heated discussion. Evidently Phillips had protested against his admission to the household. At his suggestion about a latch-key, Olden answered,

"Why, I have only one, but I'll let you in myself whenever you ring. I'll be up, never fear."

Lyon had a busy afternoon, — for in spite of

his mental absorption in matters relating to Lawrence, he was still reporting for the *News* and had to keep his assignments! He therefore had no opportunity to see Howell that day, and it was nine o'clock at night when he arrived, with his suit-case, at his new home. Olden let him in with an alacrity that suggested he had been waiting for him. This idea was also suggested by the looks of the dining room, where a tray, with bottles and glasses and a box of cigars, had been arranged alluringly within sight.

"All right, I'll be down in a minute," the new lodger said, gaily. "We'll make a night of it! Just wait till I put my suit-case in my room."

He ran upstairs to his room and looked across to Miss Elliott's School. Across the white barrenness of the snowy yard that stretched between the two houses, the light gleamed brightly from Kittie's windows. The curtain of the right window was perceptibly lower than the other. It seemed to cut off the upper third of the window. Lyon read the message with keen interest,— "Mrs. Broughton is better. She gives no signs of departure." Across the dark he blew a kiss to the unseen messenger, and hurried downstairs where his mysterious landlord was walking restlessly up and down the long dining room.

"Well, what shall we gossip about?" he asked gaily. Olden had shown no signs of physical feebleness, yet Lyon felt a hurt about him that

prompted him to a show of cheerfulness beyond his habit with a stranger, and the success of his curtain code had put him into an elated mood.

"What do people generally gossip about?"

"Their friends, don't they? And their enemies; and the delinquencies of both."

"That's all right," said Olden, quickly. "Tell me about your friends and their delinquencies."

"I haven't many here. I'm a stranger myself, comparatively. The man in Waynscott I care most for, and admire most, and am sorriest for, is Arthur Lawrence."

Olden was leaning forward in an attitude of eager listening.

"That sounds like a good beginning. Will you have something — ? Then have a cigar, and talk to me about Arthur Lawrence. I'm entirely a stranger in Waynscott, you know, but of course I have heard of the murder. I infer that you believe him innocent."

"Yes, I do."

"Yet I see that he was unable or unwilling to give a very clear account of his movements that evening. — Phillips read me the newspapers, and I thought it looked like a tight box for him, unless he could explain his movements somewhat."

"But he may explain them yet. Trial by newspaper is not final. There has been no chance for the real testimony, you know."

"Has gossip nothing to say on the subject?"

persisted Olden. He had dropped into an arm chair and was surrounding himself with smoke, but Lyon was aware that through the smoke and the goggles which he still wore he was bending an observant eye upon his visitor.

"Gossip says many nothings. So far, nothing relevant. The murder seems to be one of these clueless mysteries which are the most difficult for the police to unravel."

"But you, — you are behind the scenes, in a fashion. Don't you know something that the public hasn't got hold of? I — I'm interested, you see."

Lyon smoked thoughtfully. The man's interest was so marked that it struck him as going beyond the bounds of ordinary curiosity. He felt that he must probe it, and so he answered with a view to keeping the subject going.

"We hear of the mysteries that are solved, but there are many more that drop from the notice of the public because they remain mysteries forever."

"Is it not possible that there may be a woman connected with the mystery?" asked Olden with a sudden hardening of his voice.

Lyon smoked deliberately a moment.

"With nothing known and everything to guess, it is difficult to say of anything that it is not possible," he answered.

"Has Lawrence's name never been connected with a woman? Is there no gossip?"

"Of the sort you suggest, nothing, I believe." Lyon's voice was calm, if his feelings were not.

"Your Mr. Lawrence is a wonder," said Olden, drily. "I hope to meet him some day. Let us drink to his release and to the confusion of the Grand Jury. A man who can keep himself free from all feminine entanglements ought to get out of a little thing like an accusation for murder without any difficulty."

"You seem to have strong feelings on the subject," said Lyon. It occurred to him that all the drawing-out need not be on Olden's side. Olden smoked a minute in silence, and then asked abruptly,

"Do you believe that women as a class have any sense of truth?"

"Oh, they must have some!"

"But do they have the same sense of honor that we have?"

"I don't know that we have enough to hurt. But you are thinking of some specific case. Suppose you give me an outline of it."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, we always are thinking of a woman when we generalize about women."

Olden smoked hard and in silence for a few minutes.

"I don't know whether you are right about that or not," he said finally, "but you are right in saying that I was thinking of a specific instance,

and I'll be rather glad to give you an outline of it, because I should like to ask your opinion in regard to it. I think I understand men pretty well, but I never have had much to do with women. Perhaps if I had, — this is the story of a friend of mine. He told me about it just before I came on."

Lyon nodded. Possibly that might be the truth, but he would keep an open mind on the subject.

"My friend is a man past middle life, — a successful business man. He has made money and has knocked about the world a good deal, but he never fell in love until he was nearly fifty, — never had time, I suppose. Then he was hard hit. The woman was a good deal younger than he was, beautiful, and all that. He married her just as soon as he could win her consent, and was idiotically happy. For a year he thought she was happy, too. She seemed to be. Then one day she received a letter from her old home that upset her. She tried to conceal her disturbance from him, but he was too watchful of her moods to be deceived. From that moment his happiness was destroyed. His wife was concealing something from him. Other letters followed. They always had the same effect. The husband could not be blind to the fact that his wife was changed. She avoided him, withheld her confidence, and he found her more than once in tears. Perhaps it

does not sound very serious, but you must remember that he was madly in love with his wife. It was serious for him."

Lyon nodded. "Did he know anything of his wife's past history, — her friends, or her —"

"Her lovers? No, he didn't. There was the sting. He simply didn't know anything. He could only see that something had come out of that unknown past to ruin his happiness."

"Why didn't he ask her, straight?"

"He did, once, and she pretended not to know what he was talking about. After that he set himself to watch. He pretended to be called away on a sudden business trip. She left, by the next train, for her old home, and went at once to the man with whom she had been corresponding."

"How did you — how did her husband know who the man was?"

"He had once found a letter, destroyed before it was finished, which enabled him to identify the man."

"Was it a love-letter?"

'Olden dropped his head on his hand. "Not in terms. But it showed that this man possessed a confidence which she withheld from her husband. In it she spoke of her unhappiness in her married life as of something that he would understand, — something that they had acknowledged between them. Does that seem a little thing to you?"

"No, I can understand. Well, what did he do?"

"Nothing, yet. But I am afraid he may do something. If he should kill the man, would you say he was justified?"

"What would be the use?" asked Lyon, lightly.

"That isn't the question, when your brain is on fire. You see only one thing. The whole world is blotted out, and only that one thing burns before your eyes. I suppose that is the way one feels when going mad. Everything else blotted out, you know, except that one thing that you can't forget night or day, — awake or asleep, —" His voice was trembling with a passion that went beyond control. If Lyon had had any question that the strange man was telling his own story, he could no longer doubt it. Such sympathy is not given to the troubles of a friend.

"I understand that he has not killed the man yet?"

"No, — not yet."

"Well, then I'd advise him to wait a bit, in any event, and make sure of his facts. There's no sense in hurrying these things. Tell him to count ten. Also tell him that circumstantial evidence is the very devil. The chances are that if a thing looks so and so, that's the very reason for its turning out to be the other way. Now take this case of Lawrence's."

"Yes. What of it?" Olden had recovered himself, and he asked his question with an interest that seemed genuine, if somewhat cynical.

"The circumstantial evidence against him is pretty bad, yet you wouldn't want to have him hanged on the strength of it, would you?"

"I would not," said Olden, with a sudden laugh that sounded strange after his passion of a moment before. "I can think of nothing that I should more regret than to have your friend Lawrence hung. I drink to his speedy discharge." And he poured himself a stiff drink and drained it with a fervor that made the act seem sacrificial. Certainly there was a good deal of the original Adam in this curious stranger.

The sudden ring of the telephone in the hall cut so sharply across the silence in the house that it startled them both. Olden went to answer it, and immediately returned.

"It's someone to speak to you, Mr. Lyon,— name is Howell."

"Oh, yes. I suppose he got my new address from the Grosvenor."

He went to the phone, and this is the conversation that ensued.

Howell: "Hello, Lyon. Changed your room?"

Lyon: "Yes. I followed your suggestion."

Howell: "That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I'm getting nervous about putting off

that interview with Mrs. Broughton any longer. Barry tells me she is worse. I don't want to risk waiting until it is too late. If she should die, for instance, — ”

Lyon: “ Barry is bluffing, to protect his patient. She is better.”

Howell: “ How do you know? ”

Lyon: “ Miss Kittie tells me she is better.”

Howell: “ When was that? ”

Lyon: “ An hour ago.”

Howell: “ How did you hear from her? ”

Lyon: “ By heliograph. We have established a code.”

Howell: “ You seem to have been improving the time! You think I'm safe to wait, then, a day or two? I simply must see her before she gets away, you know.”

Lyon: “ No sign of departure, the code said.”

Howell. “ And will you know if she should suddenly show signs of departure? ”

Lyon: “ Yes. Her curtain will be lowered. Clear down means gone.”

Howell: “ That will be too late.”

Lyon: “ She isn't likely to bolt without warning, and no one would be in better position to take note than Miss Kittie.”

Howell: “ All right, I'll depend on that, then. But if Bede finds her first, I'll regret my humanity.”

Lyon: “ I think we're safe.”

Howell: "Perhaps. But not sure." And he rang off.

When Lyon returned to the dining room, he found that the door was ajar, though he had thought that he closed it after him when going to the 'phone. If his host had been curious enough to listen to one side of the conversation, Lyon hoped that he might have found it interesting. Intelligible it could hardly have been.

CHAPTER XII

LYON had carefully refrained from giving Lawrence any hint as to the new turn his suspicions had taken. He had an instinctive feeling that the masterful prisoner in the county jail would have scant patience with any unauthorized efforts on his part to penetrate the mystery. That, to Lyon's mind, might be a very good reason for not talking about his activities, but he was the last man to abandon his own line merely out of deference to another man's prejudices. He was always more interested in getting results, however, than in getting credit, so he was content to work instead of talk.

But on his next visit to Lawrence, he took occasion to put a hypothetical question which went directly to the heart of his perplexity and for which he very much wanted an answer — though he didn't expect to get it.

"Lawrence," he said, in a casual tone, having first carefully taken a position where he had the advantage of the light in watching the other man's face, "have you considered the possibility that Miss Wolcott may, after all, have had nothing to do with that affair?"

Lawrence turned upon him with swift amazement and anger.

"What do you mean?" he demanded in a threatening undertone, with an apprehensive glance at the door.

"The guard couldn't hear me to save his ears. I mean simply, — are you sure of your premises? You see, I am taking for granted that your policy of silence is to protect — oh, I won't mention her name again. But what if the facts should be that she doesn't need any protection? What if it really proves that you are making a sacrifice which is not merely heroic but is unnecessary? Suppose the woman who ran across the street was someone else?"

"Have you dared to tell — to hint —"

"What I might dare to do is one thing, what I have actually done is another. As a matter of fact, I have neither told nor hinted, — nor have I knocked you down for thinking such a thing possible."

Lawrence dropped into his chair and let his head sink on his hand.

"I beg your pardon. But it makes me wild to think how helpless I am. I can't keep Howell, for instance, from mousing around, and I can't keep Bede from peering and prying," —

"Or me from guessing or breathing. No, you can't. Of course they may not discover anything, but even the police sometimes get hold of the right

clue. You are trying to keep them from a certain clue, at a tremendous risk to yourself, and yet you don't know, you only suspect, that your silence may benefit the person I do not name."

Lawrence drummed impatiently with his fingers for a minute, and then he looked up with a direct glance into Lyon's eyes.

"Lyon, you're an awfully good fellow to have any patience with what must seem sheer unreason to you, and I wish I could be quite frank with you and make you see the situation as I do. But you are certain to be put on the witness stand yourself, so I simply can't give you any facts which you don't already know. You see that?"

"Yes, — but are they facts?"

Lawrence looked at him queerly. "What explanation do you suggest for my cane being where it was?" he asked.

"You left it somewhere, — perhaps at the state library — and Fullerton picked it up, carried it off, and had it in his hand when he was attacked."

Lawrence looked surprised and then he laughed in quick amusement.

"Ingenious, by Jove! I hope you've suggested that theory to Howell. It will give him something to occupy his mind. It would be difficult for him to prove it, but then, it would be difficult for the prosecution to disprove it — *unless they should happen to discover where I actually did forget my cane.*"

“ You mean — ? ”

“ You can probably work it out,” said Lawrence drily. “ Supposing that I did mean that, don’t you see that the one and only person who could throw any light on how my cane came to be where it was found is the one and only person who must not be questioned? ”

“ I see. But do you really think that the one and only person will maintain silence on such a matter at such a cost to you? ”

“ If things come to the worst, I fear the one and only person will not. My hope is that things will not come to the worst, — that there may be a disagreement or even an acquittal. Really you see, I don’t feel so sure the prosecution holds a hand that leaves me no chance of coming out even. We are both bluffing, but I rather think I can bluff hardest if my flank isn’t turned by my too zealous counsel.”

“ Still, — ”

“ Still, Lyon, and yet, and nevertheless, and in spite of all, I am happier than I remember ever being before in all my life, and I shall never think of this room so long as I live without feeling again the joy of a conqueror.”

“ May I ask why, you extraordinary man? ”

“ Because the one and only person has accepted my suggestion in regard to silence so sweetly. I have made several suggestions to that person, I don’t mind telling you, which have not been ac-

cepted. They have been turned down hard. It seemed to have become a habit with her and I was getting discouraged. Now, the course which I suggested in this instance would not be agreeable to her. Nothing could be more opposed to her natural instinct than to keep silence if—well, under the circumstances. She has done what must have been a thousand times harder than to make even the most public explanation, she has done it for me, — because I asked her to. Now do you understand why I am happy? I'm in Paradise!"

Lyon grasped his hand in sympathetic silence, and left him. At least he had found out why Lawrence was so convinced in his own mind that Miss Wolcott was somehow implicated. Evidently it was the cane that seemed to him conclusive. He had left his cane at Miss Wolcott's and he knew it. It could have come into evidence in connection with the murder of Fullerton only through Miss Wolcott's direct or indirect agency. That was Lawrence's conviction. To protect her in any event, he was using his influence to keep her from speaking and drawing conclusions from her compliance which might be justified if his theory of her complicity was correct, but which would fall to the ground if, as a matter of fact, she was really as ignorant of the murder (and the cane) as Lyon was now inclined to believe she might be. In that case, alas for poor Lawrence! His paradise might prove but a Fool's Paradise, after

all. The primary question remained, therefore, whether she really was implicated or not.

He had promised her, at their first and only interview, to call occasionally and report as to the progress of affairs, but he had deferred carrying out his promise, partly because he had nothing decisive to tell her and partly because he was rather shy of encouraging a confidence which might possibly place him in possession of embarrassing information. He did not want to learn anything that would hamper him when he was called to the witness stand, as he undoubtedly would be. But two things happened that day to make him keep his promise without further postponement.

The first was his discovery that Bede was hovering about Miss Wolcott's neighborhood. Lyon had caught a fleeting glimpse of Miss Wolcott going into a shop. A moment later he noticed Bede across the street from the shop, busily engaged in studying a display of hosiery in a show-window. He did not connect the two events at the moment, but half an hour later he met Miss Wolcott face to face, still in the shopping district. The look of suppressed pain in her eyes as she gravely bowed disturbed him so much that he walked on rather unobservantly for a few steps.

Then he was brought back to consciousness by a keen look that pierced him like a surgeon's probe as a quiet gray little man passed him. It was

Bede. The significance of that piercing scrutiny flashed upon Lyon. Bede had seen him bow to Miss Wolcott and was sorting that little fact into the proper pigeon-hole in his brain. He turned to look after the detective. Bede was pausing to turn over some second-hand books on an exposed stall, and he lingered there until Miss Wolcott came out of a shop farther down the block. As she went on, Bede, who had never glanced in her direction, finished his inspection of the books and went on also. Casually, he followed the same direction she had taken. Lyon, who had lingered to observe his action, walked on very thoughtfully.

That was the first thing. The second was a special-delivery letter which was brought to him that same afternoon while he was rushing to an assignment. The urgency of the outside found no counterpart in the simple little note which it enclosed:

“ Dear Mr. Lyon:

“ Could you conveniently call this evening?
I shall be at home after seven. Yours sincerely,
“ EDITH WOLCOTT.”

Lyon looked at the special delivery stamp, remembered Bede, and put the note in his pocket with some anxiety. What was up now? He perceived an urgency in the request which did not appear in the words themselves, and he looked for-

ward to the call with some anxiety. If her nerve had broken down, and she should hurl a confession at him before he could stop her, what should he do about it?

CHAPTER XIII

MISS WOLCOTT received Lyon with the same curiously cold and impersonal manner that had struck him before, but unless he deceived himself, it was a manner deliberately assumed this time to conceal some unwonted nervousness of which she was herself afraid. Her face was as Sphinx-like as ever, but there was an unevenness of tension in her voice which betrayed emotion.

“I sent for you because something curious has happened,” she said abruptly, “and I don’t know anyone else to talk it over with. I received yesterday, by mail, this letter.” And she handed him a single sheet of note paper, on which was written, in a bold hand,

“Remember, I said living or dead.

“WARREN FULLERTON.”

Lyon looked up at her in amaze.

“You received this yesterday?”

“Yes.”

"Are you familiar with Mr. Fullerton's handwriting?"

"Yes. It is his."

"Can you be positive about that?"

He thought she suppressed a shudder, but her voice was coldly calm as she answered, "I do not think I can be deceived in it. I know it very well."

"May I see the envelope?"

She handed it to him silently. It corresponded with the paper, was addressed to her in the same bold, assured hand, and the postmark was particularly plain. It had been mailed the day it had been delivered. The note and envelope were both made of a thin peculiar grayish-green paper, oriental in appearance, with a faint perfume about them that would have been dizzying if more pronounced. Lyon held the paper up to the light. It was watermarked, but so faintly that he had to study it carefully before he made out that the design was that of a coiled serpent with hooded head. As he moved the paper to bring out the outline, the coils seemed to change and move and melt into one another. Certainly it would have been a difficult paper to duplicate.

"Was Mr. Fullerton in the habit of using this paper?"

"Yes. It was made for him. He was given to fads like that. And another thing, though a trifle. You will notice he uses two green one-cent

stamps, instead of the red two. He always stamped the letters written on that paper with green stamps."

"Does the message convey any special meaning to you?"

Miss Wolcott waited a moment before replying, as though to gather her self-control into available form. "I was at one time engaged to be married to Mr. Fullerton. I was very young and romantic and — silly. I had not known him very long. And almost immediately I had to go east to spend three months with some friends. While I was away I wrote to Mr. Fullerton, — very silly letters. After I came back something happened that made me change my mind and my feelings towards him. I broke the engagement and sent him back his letters and presents. He refused to be released or to release me. It was a very terrible time. He said that if ever I should marry anyone else, he would send my love-letters to him to my husband, — and this whether he was alive or dead."

"Ah! That explains, you think, this phrase?"

"I am sure of it."

"Did the threat make any special impression on you at the time? I mean did it influence your actions at all?"

"It made me determine never to think of marrying." Then, in answer to Lyon's look of surprise, she added, impetuously, "I would rather

die than have anyone read those letters. I simply could not think of it. No man's love could stand such a test. To know that his wife had said such silly, silly things to another man, — it would be intolerable."

"But no gentleman *would* read them."

She shrugged her shoulders lightly. "In a play, no. But in real life, he would be very curious. Or, if he did not read them, he still could not forget them. He would have them in his mind, and would perhaps guess them worse than they were. Besides, you do not know Mr. Fullerton. He would have managed in some way to bring about what he wanted. I cannot guess how, but those letters would have been put where they *must* be read. He was not one to trip in his plans."

"Did you make any attempt to recover your letters?"

She did not answer at once, and glancing at her Lyon saw that the agitation which she had been holding back seemed to have swept her for a moment beyond her own control. She was trembling so violently that she could not speak, and only the forcible pressure of her slender hands upon the arms of her chair gave her steadiness enough to hold her emotions in check. He turned to the light and busied himself for a minute in a critical examination of the letter. Then he came back to his question — for he was of no mind to let it pass unanswered.

"Did you ever try to recover the letters?"

"Once," she said, in a very low voice.

"And you failed?"

"Worse than failed." She threw out her hand toward the note he still held. "Did he not say, living or dead? Mere death could not interfere when he had set his will upon revenge."

"Then whoever wrote this note," said Lyon, thoughtfully, "must have had knowledge of his purposes as well as access to his private desk and knowledge of his personal peculiarities in regard to stamps. Now, Miss Wolcott, you must help me. Who would be likely to know of your letters?"

"How can I tell? I have hardly seen him for four years until—" She broke off, leaving the sentence unfinished.

"Have you spoken of them yourself to anyone? Any girl friend?"

"No, never."

"To your family?"

"No. I have lived alone with my grandfather since I was fifteen. You know him,— I love him, but he is no confidant for a young girl. I have always been much alone."

"Then, so far as you know, no one could have learned from you of those letters?"

"No one."

"Not Arthur Lawrence, for instance?"

She started, and looked as though he had presented a new idea.

"I never spoke of them," she said, slowly.

"Did he know of your engagement to Fullerton?"

"He never referred to it, but it is probable that he had heard of it. Some one would have mentioned it, probably. I did not know Mr. Lawrence at that time."

"He had no reason then to know — or to guess — the importance which you placed upon the recovery of the letters?"

She looked distressed, but her glance was as searching as his own.

"Why do you ask that? What bearing has it on *this* letter?"

"Perhaps none. But I was trying to narrow down the possible actors. If you on your part have kept the knowledge of these letters to yourself inviolately, then the information about them must have been given out by Fullerton if at all. Do you know anyone to whom he would be likely to confide such a matter, — any confidant or chum?"

She shook her head helplessly. "I know nothing of his friends. My impression is that he had very few. He was a strange, solitary, secret man."

"And yet it must be clear that either he wrote this himself, or it was written on his private paper in his handwriting, by someone who had intimate knowledge of his affairs, — not only of the fact that he had those letters of yours, but of the threat which he held over you in regard to them. Now

if he wrote it himself, why wasn't it mailed until yesterday? And who did mail it yesterday, anyhow? If someone was in his confidence and is trying to play upon your fears, we must find out who it is. May I take this letter with me?"

"I don't want to ever see it again."

"And if you receive any other letters or anything comes up in any way bearing on this, will you let me know at once? I am going to try to find out about his office help. And I will leave this letter open to the sunlight for a day. If it was written yesterday, the ink will show a change by tomorrow. If written a week ago, it probably will not. As soon as I learn anything that will interest you, I will let you know."

But as he was departing she detained him, some unspoken anxiety visibly struggling with her habit of reserve.

"You spoke, when you were here before, of the possibility of my being called as a witness. If that should happen, would I have to tell about — this?"

"I do not see how it could come up, unless they could connect Lawrence with it in some way. Of course if they were trying to establish motive, — some reason for Lawrence's quarrel with Fullerton, — it might seem to have a bearing. But you never discussed Fullerton with Lawrence."

"No," she said, but her look was still troubled.

"If you are questioned," he said quietly, "you

will not have to testify except so far as you have positive knowledge. You will not have to give your thoughts or theories or guesses."

"I see," she murmured, dropping her strange, guarded eyes.

With that he left her. It was too late to take any active steps in the way of investigation that night, so he turned back toward his room, but his habit of keeping on his feet while thinking sent him on a long tramp before he finally turned in at his door. He fancied that he was going over the new elements which Miss Wolcott's confidence had thrown into the problem in his mind, but before he knew it he was making a comparison of the characters of Miss Wolcott and Kittie Tayntor. Of course it was natural to think of Kittie, — she was the only girl he knew in this place, and the only one he had had a chance to talk to for a long time, and she was so funny, with her transparent, theatrical make-believes, and so engaging, with her girlish petulances and revolts! She was like an April day, — a dash of cold rain in your face, a ray of sunshine dancing freakishly around the edges of things, and a white bud curled up close under the wet green leaves to call out the sudden rush of forgiving tenderness which you give only to what is near and dear and simple and your own. Miss Wolcott was, rather, a brooding, tropical day, still with the stillness of motionless heat, silent with the silence of fierce noontide. Low-lying

thunder-clouds belonged to her, and the passionate stroke of the lightning, and the deluging tumult of the tempest, and the swift-falling darkness, hiding the hushed passion of Life. How had Lawrence ever dared to love her? But Lawrence was a master of men, in his own way. There was an exuberant power about him which would joy in conquest. His nature was sunny where hers was veiled, but his careless lightheartedness masked a will as unyielding, a nature as passionately strong, as her own. Lawrence, now, would never see the dear, funny charms of Kittie! And with a cheerful sense that, after all, things adjusted themselves very well in this rudderless world, Lyon swung back in his walk.

At the door Olden met him.

"Well, well, well, you're late," he said testily. "What have you been doing to-day?"

"Oh, all sorts of things."

"I don't care about that. What have you been doing about the Lawrence case?"

"I don't know that I have been doing anything." Literally, he didn't know whether he had or not, and he didn't care to share his half-formed suspicions. "I have to take things as they come, you know."

"Haven't you seen Lawrence to-day?"

"No."

"Nor his lawyer, Howell?"

"No."

Olden tapped with his fingers impatiently on the table, for, as before, he had led his guest into the dining room, the only really habitable room in this strange Bachelor's Hall. "Where have you been this evening?"

"Calling on a young lady!"

Olden looked up sharply. "Miss Kittie?"

"No." Then, with a half mischievous desire to play up to the other's hungry interest in the case, he added, "A young lady Lawrence knows and admires, Miss Wolcott."

The bait drew even better than he expected. Olden leaned forward with his arms on the table and his chin on his crossed arms, and Lyon felt the blaze of interest behind the goggles. The air between them tingled with it as with an electric discharge.

"Lawrence admires her, does he?" he said, with a curious deliberation. "Particularly?"

"I think quite particularly."

"How do you know?"

"I merely guessed it, from a look I saw on his face once."

"Do people generally guess it?"

"I rather think not. Gossip hasn't mentioned it."

"And does she believe in him?"

"Well, that is a point I didn't bring into the conversation. This is only the second time I have seen her."

"I didn't mean believe in his innocence. I meant, believe in *him*, — in his interest in her?"

Lyon laughed. The man's persistent interest in Lawrence's affairs was curious. "Really, I didn't ask her that either. But I fancy Lawrence is a man to make himself understood in that direction when he wants to."

"You mean he makes love to every pretty woman he knows?"

"Oh, no, not so bad as that. Lawrence is a gentleman. Still, he is partly Irish. There's an old Irish jingle I used to know about the slow-creeping Saxon and the amorous Celt, — that's the idea. Irish eyes make love of themselves, whenever their owner is too busy about something else to keep a tight rein on them." Lyon had talked jestingly, partly with the idea of erasing the memory of a remark which he began to think had been somewhat less than discreet. He was not prepared for the effect of his words. Olden sprang to his feet and struck the table with his clenched hand.

"Then damn Irish eyes," he cried. "Damn the man who thinks he has the right to make love to any woman who is tender-hearted enough to listen. Damn the man who thinks that as long as a woman will take his easy lies for truth he has a right to lie."

"With all my heart. Though, for that matter, he is pretty apt to damn himself without any help from us. But Lawrence isn't that kind of a man."

Olden had dropped back in his chair and his momentary outburst had given place to a sullen gloom that Lyon guessed had more relation to his own thoughts and to the story he had told so impersonally the other evening than it had to their present conversation. There was something pathetic in the mood he showed, — a strong man bound into helplessness by the Liliputian cords of emotion. When a young man had to have it out with his own heart, it was a fair and square fight, with no odds. But at Olden's age, the thing was not decent to look upon. It was like seeing some old tennis champion going down before play that was only healthy exercise for the youngster in the game. He jumped to his feet.

"Come, I'm going to bed. Good night, Mr. Olden."

"Good night," said Olden, absently. Then he looked up, with an obvious effort to be civil. "Don't think that I have anything against your friend Lawrence or his Irish eyes," he said lightly. "I hope with all my heart that he may be set free, — with all my heart."

"So do I. Good night."

Up in his own room, Lyon's first act was to walk to the window and look across the white expanse of snow to Kittie's windows. The cheerful light answered him, with something of the subtle mischief of Kittie's own solemn air. As he looked, all the lights went out. Miss Elliott's

School was wrapped in innocent slumber. Lyon blew a kiss across the night, and then pulled down his own curtain.

He opened Fullerton's strange epistle and studied it again, but the cryptic message remained as cryptic as ever. Pulling out a number of old letters from his own writing case, he compared them with Fullerton's until he found one which corresponded closely, in the blackness of its ink, with Fullerton's. This he laid aside as a standard of comparison. Then he opened the new letter to the air, leaving it where the sun should strike it when it came into the room in the morning. The first point to determine was whether the letter had actually been written by Fullerton before his death, or whether someone still living was carrying out the dead man's sinister wishes.

CHAPTER XIV

FULLERTON, like a number of other lawyers in Waynscott, had had his office in the Equity Building, and Lyon made it convenient, in the course of his morning's tramp for news the next day, to visit the Equity. As he expected, he found Fullerton's office locked, but he hunted up the manager of the building, and persuaded him to unlock it for him. Perhaps the fact that he was a personal friend made a difference in his willingness, though he pretended to protest at what he called the morbid sensationalism of the press.

"What do you expect to get out of his empty rooms?" he asked.

"I'm working up a story," said Lyon carelessly. "I want to see what I can get in the way of personal idiosyncrasies."

The suite consisted of three rooms, — a large reception room, one side of which was covered with book-cases; a private office at the back; and, adjoining this, a room for the use of a stenographer, as was evident from the typewriter beside the window. There was so little furniture in this room

that Lyon saw it could be dismissed in the special inquiry which he had in mind. In the private office a large flat desk occupied the center of the room.

"Is this room the way Fullerton left it?" Lyon asked, taking the chair which was placed before the desk, and glancing about.

"Yes. No one has been here since he left."

"No stenographer or clerk?"

"He has had no clerk for some time, and when he needed a stenographer he called one in from the agency in the building. As a matter of fact, I think his business had fallen off rather seriously in the last few years. He had lost some of his old clients, and he didn't seem to get new ones. Often his office would be locked up and he would be away for days at a time."

"Bad for business, that. Was his office rent paid?"

The manager shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "No. But I have a lien on his library, so I guess I'm safe."

"Indeed! Then he must really have been pretty badly tied up financially?"

"He was pretty obviously going to pieces. You see, his personal tastes were expensive, and they incapacitated him for business. That cut both ways, in the matter of income."

"How about his other creditors, if you have a lien on his library? That seems to be the only valuable property here."

The manager laughed again. "If there was one man here the day after he was killed there were nineteen. They were all ready to attach his books. There was some rather deep swearing. Funny what things come out about a man after he is dead."

"It's more than funny," said Lyon, with an air of saying something worth listening to. He was automatically pulling out one drawer of the desk after another, sometimes merely glancing in, sometimes lightly turning over the contents with a careless hand. "We don't know much of the personal lives of the people about us. Things are not always what they seem." He probably could have kept up the platitudinizing longer if necessary, but he had opened all the drawers. None were locked. There was no scrap of the curious greenish gray paper anywhere, nor, indeed, anything but files of documents obviously legal, and mostly dust-covered. "But his personal belongings were rather gorgeous." He opened curiously a bronze stamp box which matched the other appointments of the desk, and examined the contents. There was a lot of red stamps, but no green. That was about all that he had hoped to discover. It had seemed probable from the first that Fullerton would have his peculiar personal belongings at his own room rather than at his office, but Lyon had wished to eliminate the other possibility.

As he came out of the room, a strange and yet

familiar figure passed down the hall toward the elevator just ahead of him, — the heavy figure and white head of Mr. Olden. Lyon glanced back. Lawrence's office was farther down the hall, and Lawrence's law clerk, a young fellow named Freeman, whom Lyon knew slightly, stood in the open door looking after his departing visitor with a curious watchfulness. On the impulse, Lyon turned back.

"What scrape has my most respectable landlord been getting into, that he needs legal advice?" he asked.

"Come in," said Freeman, with evident pleasure. "I'm mighty glad to have you give the old gentleman a character. I began to wonder if there wasn't something suspicious about him."

"Why?"

"He came in a few days ago and asked for Lawrence. I explained why he couldn't see him. He fumed around a little, and finally said he wanted a will drawn up, and couldn't I do it? I thought I could all right, so I got him to give me the items. It involved a lot of little bequests, — he seems to be a retired merchant from somewhere down the state with an interminable family connection, — and I took a lot of notes and told him I would have the will drawn up in a few days. He has been in every day since to make changes and alterations, till I am all balled up. Either I got things badly mixed in my notes or he has forgotten

just how his sisters and his cousins and his aunts are arranged. I'll swear he has mixed the babies."

"Well, if he pays you for your trouble," laughed Lyon.

"Yes, he made it clear that he wanted me to charge up my wasted time, but — he's queer all the same. I almost thought to-day that the whole business of the will was a blind, and that he was here for some purpose of his own."

"That sounds more serious. What made you think that?"

"I had gone into the inner room to hunt up my original notes, because he insisted that I had made a mistake, when I heard the roll top of Lawrence's desk pushed up. Lawrence never locks it, but the old man hadn't any business in there, all the same. I came out in a hurry, and there he was, hunting around in the desk. He wasn't a bit fazed by my coming back, either. Said he wanted some paper to write a letter and fretted and fumed over the pen and ink as though the whole outfit belonged to him. I cleared a place for him, and left him writing, while I shifted my own chair so that I could keep an eye on him. He wrote two or three short letters, and tossed something into the waste basket there. Then, when he was through, he picked up the waste basket and began hunting through it. I supposed he wanted to recover what he had thrown in, until I saw him

pick out a square envelope and put it with his own papers."

"And you think it was not his own?"

"I know it wasn't, because I knew the paper he was using. As it happens, that basket hasn't been emptied since Lawrence was here. The envelope must have been something he had tossed into the basket, — but I couldn't very well demand the return of an old envelope picked up from a waste basket. Still, I couldn't help wondering whether the man was a sneak thief or a private detective or just a little touched in the upper story."

"Has he been inquisitive about Lawrence's affairs?" Lyon asked.

"The first time he was here he asked a good many questions about him, but I thought that was natural curiosity under all the circumstances. One of his innumerable cousins had married a Lawrence and he wanted to find out if there was any connection between the families. And he really seemed to know something about him, because he insisted that Arthur Lawrence had married a Mrs. Vanderburg."

"But he didn't!"

"No, of course not. But he was a great friend of Mrs. Vanderburg's, and no one would have been surprised if he had married her. There were many who expected that to be the outcome. And when she became engaged to Broughton, whom she afterwards did marry, Lawrence took it hard. There

was a serious quarrel, and Lawrence wouldn't attend the wedding. I remember hearing my mother say that if Lawrence had had Broughton's money, Broughton would never have had any show."

"But she wasn't divorced at that time, was she?"

"No, but she could have had a divorce whenever she wanted it. Vanderburg had been missing for ten or twelve years."

This was surprising information for Lyon, and not a little disturbing. Was there, after all, a possibility that even if he established the identity of the fleeing woman as Mrs. Broughton, Lawrence might still be entangled? Lyon felt as though he were trying to pick his way among live wires.

"Did you tell Olden this story?" he asked, remembering the curious interest which that inquisitive person had always seemed to take in Lawrence's affairs.

"Well, he got it out of me, I guess. He knew so much that he could easily pump the balance."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing much. He kept nodding his head, as though he knew it all beforehand. What do you make of it, anyhow?"

"The curiosity of an idle mind," said Lyon, lightly. "There are plenty of people who have an abnormal curiosity about anybody who is accused of crime. But I wouldn't give him too much rope."

The episode gave him something new to puzzle about. Olden's curiosity about Lawrence had been marked from the beginning, and it had not been wholly a friendly curiosity. That much had been apparent. Lyon was accustomed to the curious interest which monotonously virtuous people take in criminals, and he had set down his landlord's desire to talk about the murder mystery to that score. He had shown no curiosity about Fullerton or interest in him. And though he was curious about Lawrence, he seemed very inadequately informed concerning him.

Lyon turned the thing in his mind without being able to make it fit in with anything else. At the same time he determined to find out something more about Mr. Olden at the earliest opportunity. For the immediate present, however, the thing to do was to get into Fullerton's rooms at the Wellington again, and see what discoveries he could make there.

CHAPTER XV

LYON suspected that he might have difficulty in securing admission to Fullerton's room in the Wellington a second time, and when he made application to Hunt, the janitor who had admitted him before, he found his fears were justified. Indeed, Hunt's dismay at the suggestion struck him as extreme.

"Go in? No, *sir!* Nobody goes in. The police are responsible for that room, now. I haven't anything to do with it, and I wouldn't have, not for a farm."

"You let me in before, you know, and the police didn't take it to heart."

"Eh?"

"I mean they didn't mind. Bede knew I was there."

Hunt shook his head. "Mr. Bede says to me that if I let anybody else in, he would have me arrested for killing Fullerton."

"That's nonsense, you know. When did he say that, — when I got in before?"

"No farther back than yesterday he said that."

"Has he been around again?"

"Yes, he has." There was something nervous and dogged about the man's manner that puzzled Lyon.

"Well, see here. I'll make it worth your while to let me in for an hour. You can go along to see I don't steal anything, if you like. I want to make sure of something I overlooked before."

"I tell you I can't, Mr. Lyon, even if I wanted to. The police have put a seal on the door. It can't be opened without their knowing."

"Then pass me in through the window."

Hunt lifted his downcast eyes and gave Lyon a long, curious look.

"You wouldn't want to, if you knew what I know."

"What's that?"

Hunt shuffled and stumbled, but perhaps at heart he was not unwilling to confess his fears in the hope of having them quenched. He looked somewhat shamefaced, however, as he asked, "Do you believe that sometimes the dead walk?"

"I don't know," Lyon answered non-committally. He was more anxious to get at Hunt's ideas than to confess his own. "What makes you ask? Have you seen anything?"

"Well, — not exactly, —"

"I'd like to hear about it."

"Well, it's this way. Mr. Fullerton had a way of throwing the letters he wrote of an evening on the floor right before the door, so that I could

pick them up in the morning and give them to the carrier when he came around. I always took in his breakfast tray and his paper, —”

“How did you get in?”

“He could release the lock on his door by a spring from his bedroom. There was nothing too much trouble if it was going to save him some trouble afterwards.”

“Go on.”

“The letters were always in a certain place, — just where he could toss them easily from the writing table where he sat. They would fall on a certain mat, so that I knew just what to pick up. If I didn’t, he would swear to turn a nigger white. Mr. Fullerton wasn’t no saint. That’s what makes it worse.”

“Makes what worse?”

“Why, this that I’m going to tell you. Day before yesterday something possessed me to go in to that room. I don’t know what it was, — I just was pestered to go in. I thought I would just look inside, and there, on the rug before the door where they always used to be, was a letter in Mr. Fullerton’s hand, on his paper, ready stamped to be mailed.”

“This is interesting,” said Lyon, with sparkling eyes. “What did you do with it?”

“I didn’t rightly know what to do with it at first, I was so took back. I had been in that room five or six times since — since Mr. Fullerton was

killed, letting the police in, and you, and going in by myself once to make sure the windows was locked, and there wasn't no letter on the rug, or I'm blind. Now, what I want to know is, *where did that letter come from?*"

"That I can't tell yet. But what did you do with it?"

"I mailed it. It seemed that it must have been something that Mr. Fullerton wrote that last night he was home and threw down for me to mail, and that somehow, in the excitement, it must have been kicked under the edge of the rug, and then, somehow, kicked out again the last time someone was in the room. At least, I couldn't see what else it could be, so I gave it to the carrier, thinking that it ought to go to the person it was addressed to."

"I think you were quite right. To whom was it addressed?"

But Hunt was unexpectedly reticent. "Mr. Fullerton didn't like to have me talk about his affairs."

"Oh, that's all right. But I think I know about this letter. It was for Miss Wolcott, wasn't it?"

Hunt's surprised look gave confirmation, though his habit of discretion prevented a verbal assent. "That isn't all," he said, hastily, returning to his story. "That was queer enough to set me wondering about it all day, and yesterday, when I

went around in the morning, I opened the door just to make myself believe that it really had happened. There on the rug was another letter, just like the one the day before." His eyes sought Lyon's nervously. He seemed to be almost afraid of his own words.

"Another letter for Miss Wolcott?" gasped Lyon, in utter amaze.

"It was just like the first," Hunt persisted doggedly.

"What did you do with it? Did you mail it?"

"I wouldn't touch it. Not for money, Mr. Lyon. Where did that letter come from? That's what I want to know. I wasn't going to have any truck with it."

"But you didn't leave it lying on the rug?"

"Mr. Bede got it."

"Bede! Oh, the devil!" gasped Lyon. "How did he come to get it?"

"He came in in the morning and I told him what I had seen. I couldn't have stayed in the house without someone knowing. He went in and got the letter, and then he put a seal on the door, so that no one else should get in. He came here again this morning himself and looked into the room, but there wasn't anything on the rug. Do you suppose it was perhaps because the last one wasn't sent? Does *he* know? I know some as thinks he had truck with the devil while he was

alive all right. Say, what do you think about such things, Mr. Lyon?"

"I think you ought to have mailed that letter to Miss Wolcott. Bede has no business with her letters."

"I wasn't going to touch it," said Hunt doggedly.

"Did Bede ask you anything about her?"

"He asked if I knew whether she ever came here to Fullerton's room. I wouldn't know. I never saw her to know her." Hunt was evidently aggrieved over the turn things had taken generally. "Then he wanted to know particularly what that lady looked like that came to see Fullerton that last night, — the one he went out with. I didn't see her, but the elevator boy told, same as Donohue told at the inquest, that she wore a veil and a dark dress and a fur coat, short. Anybody might be dressed like that."

"Who has the apartment above?" Lyon asked abruptly.

"It's empty. The people moved out this week."

"What day?"

"Yesterday and the day before."

"Let me look at it. Perhaps I might take it. Is it furnished?"

"No, the furniture was moved out. Come up with me, sir."

Lyon knew the arrangement of the suites in the

Wellington. They were all alike, in the corresponding positions. He already knew the arrangement of Fullerton's room, and his chief interest in the apartment above was in its relation to the wall outside. He leaned out of the window to examine it while Hunt was detained in the hall by a passing tenant, and when the man appeared Lyon's mind was made up.

"I'd like to take this apartment for a week. They are making some alterations at the Grosvenor" (those alterations at the Grosvenor were very opportune!) "and I want a place to stay for a few nights. You can put some furniture into the bedroom, can't you? I shan't need anything else. I may not be here more than a night or two."

Hunt looked shrewd. "You needn't think that being in the building makes any difference about the room below, Mr. Lyon!"

"That's all right," laughed Lyon. "Really, what I want is to keep an eye on Bede. And if Fullerton's ghost comes to carry you off because you didn't mail that letter, I'll be here to explain things and make it easy for you."

The arrangement was made without difficulty, and Lyon went away with Hunt's assurance that the bedroom would be habitable when he returned that night. It was his "night off" at the paper, and he had a mind to make the most of the freedom which that circumstance would give him.

Several important things happened before the evening came, and these must be first recounted; but it may as well be mentioned here that when Lyon did return that evening, the bag which Hunt obligingly carried upstairs contained, with a few other trifles, a rope fire-escape and a glazier's diamond.

CHAPTER XVI

THE fact that Bede had put a seal on Fullerton's door indicated that the detective had not yet made the examination of the room which unquestionably it was his intention to make. That he should have deferred so important a matter for twenty-four hours could only be explained on the theory that he had some still more important project on hand which was occupying his personal attention.

Lyon intended to get into Fullerton's rooms if possible before Bede did, but the plan which he had hastily formed at the Wellington required the cover of darkness. He could do nothing along that line before night, and in the meantime he felt that he could do nothing more interesting (and possibly important) than to discover what Bede was engaged upon that was so engrossing as to make him postpone the investigation of Fullerton's rooms to another day.

Lyon figured it out like this: Bede had received from Hunt (and undoubtedly had opened and read) a letter from Fullerton addressed to Miss Wolcott. He already knew (as had appeared at

their first interview) that Fullerton had at one time been engaged to Miss Wolcott. Therefore the association of her name with his was not a new idea. Yet he had been "shadowing" her yesterday afternoon. Presumably, therefore, he had suddenly come to perceive a new importance in her movements. Was his watchfulness over her the occasion of his present preoccupation? Lyon would have given much for a clairvoyant vision to tell him where Bede was at that moment. Being obliged to trust instead to his reasoning powers, he went to Hemlock Avenue, and walked past Miss Wolcott's house. The house wore its customary air of seclusion and there was no lounge in the street. He walked a block farther, and went into a drug store, where, as he happened to know, there was a public telephone and a gossiping clerk.

"Has Bede been here to-day?" he asked, carelessly.

"Bede who?"

"Don't you know Bede, the detective? — little gray man with keen eyes and a voice that he keeps behind his teeth. I expected to find him here."

"He was here this morning, — or a man like him," said the clerk. "A detective, you say. Gee!"

"What's up?"

The clerk was looking rather startled. "Well, if I had known he was a detective! He gave out

that he was the credit-man for the new furniture store around the corner, and asked about several people in the neighborhood that we have accounts with. Our old man has some stock in the furniture concern, so I gave him all the information I could."

"What accounts did he ask about? Do you remember?"

The clerk named half a dozen. Lyon was not surprised to hear Miss Wolcott's among them. He was both surprised and startled to hear Miss Elliott's.

"What did you tell him about these two?" he asked thoughtfully.

"I let him see their accounts in the ledger."

"I wish you'd let me see those same accounts."

The clerk demurred and Lyon, who had noticed a college fraternity pin in the other's scarf, opened his coat. He wore the same pin.

"Oh, all right," said the easy-going clerk, with a laugh. "If I'm going to be fired for giving anything away to a detective, I'll have the satisfaction of helping a Nota Bena anyhow. Here are the account books. Come around here."

He opened a page with Miss Edith Wolcott's name at the top. The latest entry caught Lyon's eye at once.

"Nov. 25, Sulphonal, 6gr., .45."

The date was the date of Fullerton's murder. Lyon pointed to the entry.

“ Could you tell me what time of the day that sale was made? ”

“ That’s exactly what the other man asked,” the clerk exclaimed, in amaze.

“ And you told him —? ”

“ It was half past nine in the evening. I happened to remember because I leave at half past nine every evening and the night clerk comes on, and just as I was going out Miss Wolcott came in and asked if I could give her something to make her sleep. She said she was too nervous to sleep, and I noticed she seemed all of a tremble. Her hands were shaking when she took the packet.”

“ Did you tell Bede all that? ”

“ I guess I did.”

“ Did he ask you any other questions? ”

“ Not about Miss Wolcott. He looked a long time at Miss Elliott’s account.”

“ Let me see it, then.”

The clerk turned the pages.

“ We charge everything that is prescribed for anyone at the school to Miss Elliott’s account, and show on our bill who it was for,” said the clerk. “ That’s what these names mean.” He pointed to the names “ Miss Jones,” “ Miss Beatly,” etc., opposite each item. Lyon was distinctly startled to catch the name “ Miss Tayntor ” at frequent intervals.

“ Has she been ill? ” he asked with quick con-

cern, and then added lamely, "She's a — sort of cousin of mine."

The clerk grinned.

"Gunther's chocolates."

"Oh!"

Lyon studied the entries assiduously for the next few moments. Among the latest were a number of charges, "for Mrs. W. B." Had that meant anything to Bede?

"Did Bede ask about any of them in particular?" he inquired by way of answering his own query.

"He wanted to know who Mrs. W. B. was."

"What did you tell him?"

"Told him they were Dr. Barry's prescriptions. They were marked that way. That's all I know."

"Remember anything else he asked about?"

"No. That's about all."

Lyon went into the telephone booth and called up Dr. Barry.

"Hello, Barry. This is Lyon. I want to know how Mrs. W. B. is getting along."

"Now see here, Lyon, don't you think you are crowding things a little? There really hasn't been time for any radical change since noon."

"What do you mean?"

"I told you at noon that she was not to be disturbed for several days yet."

"Told *me?*"

"Well, I told the boy who telephoned for you."

"I have not authorized anyone to telephone for me."

"What? Why, someone telephoned in your name, and you have been such a nuisance about the case that I thought of course it was you again."

"Did you happen to mention the lady's name, or only her initials?" asked Lyon.

Barry hesitated so long in answering that Lyon could only draw the most serious conclusion.

"I can't say," Barry answered, with some constraint.

"It's important I should know, Barry. You know she was very desirous of keeping her visit here unknown, and if you have been giving it away, I must at least know the facts, so as to head off trouble if possible." He threw all his earnestness into his voice and Barry yielded a reluctant reply, saying,

"It is possible that I did. I thought it was your message."

"Did he ask anything else in particular?"

"No. Excuse me, I'm very busy." And the 'phone shut off.

Lyon walked out and back up Hemlock Avenue. He was breathing quickly as though he had been running.

"If I were Bede I think I should be rather

proud of myself, making two such hauls as that in one morning. At this rate, Bede will soon know all that I know myself and a little more," he said to himself. "Is it possible that he will attach any significance to Miss Wolcott's purchase of a soporific on the fatal 25th? Good Lord, I wish she had stayed at home that evening! That visit to the druggist at half-past nine brings her very close to the scene of the murder. Did she go for a sleeping powder before or after the murder? Is it possible after all —" He shook his head impatiently at his own suggestion.

"At any rate, I must let Howell know at once that Bede has discovered Mrs. Broughton. Something will come from that, and soon. I suspect we'll have to defy dear Dr. Barry. He deserves the limit of the law."

He was within half a block of Olden's. He determined to go there to telephone. It was the nearest place and incidentally it would enable him to get Kittie's latest report on Mrs. Broughton's condition.

As he entered the hall, Olden met him, — if indeed this wild-eyed man, whose goggles lay crushed on the floor and whose white wig sat askew upon his own black hair, could be the sedate and decorous Olden. He fairly hurled himself at Lyon, crushing his arm with an iron grasp.

"The curtain is down, — have you seen?"

What does it mean? Where is she? Has she gone away? Can't you speak? What do you know about it? *Where* has she gone?" His questions piled one upon another unintelligibly.

"What in the world do you mean?" gasped Lyon. "The curtain —" He tore himself away and rushed upstairs to his window. Kittie's curtain was down to the very bottom in the left hand window. "Gone!" he exclaimed, in blank bewilderment.

Olden had followed close.

"She pulled the curtain down just now, — just before you came in. I was watching, — I have been watching all the time, — I saw her come and pull it down."

"How did you know about the curtains?" asked Lyon, realizing for the first time that Olden was betraying knowledge that he was not supposed to have.

"I heard what you said at the 'phone. I knew what you came here for, of course, — that's why I let you come, — you were to help me watch without knowing it, — and now she has gone, — slipped away before our very eyes, —"

"Who are you?"

"Woods Broughton." He pronounced the name with careless impatience, as though he had never tried to keep it a secret. "What are you going to do? We must find her."

"Come downstairs," said Lyon, adjusting him-

self to the new situation. "We must telephone to Howell."

Howell was not an imaginative man, and it took some time to make him grasp the double idea that Mrs. Broughton had disappeared and that Lyon's landlord had suddenly turned out to be Broughton himself. The whole thing was irregular, and he felt himself confused and embarrassed. But he agreed that he must come at once for a consultation.

"I think we shall get along better if we are quite frank," said Lyon, while they were waiting for Howell. "Will you explain your object in disguising yourself, so that we may know just where we stand in relation to each other?"

"To find out what her secret was," Broughton answered, passionately. He clenched his hands till the knuckles were white, and his heavy-featured face, shaped by half a century of business life into lines of impassive self-control, was wrenched by emotion that was half pitiful, half ludicrous. "To find out what hold this man Lawrence has upon her, — to kill him, perhaps, —"

"Lawrence? Good heavens, what nonsense!" cried Lyon. "What made you connect her with Lawrence in any way?"

"I told you that it was a letter that came from Waynscott that first upset her. She had been happy before that. I swear it. She was

happy and content as my wife. Then his letters came — ”

“ What made you think they were from him? Did you see any of them? ”

“ I found one, partly burnt, in the fireplace in her bedroom. I could make out the signature plainly, — it was Arthur Lawrence. ”

“ You could read nothing else? ”

“ No, but I found her unfinished answer in her writing desk. ”

“ What did she say? ” asked Lyon, in a calm voice.

Broughton struggled to keep his voice steady. “ She said that she was the most unhappy woman in the world, — God, I had been so happy! — that he had been right in warning her against marrying me, and that she must see him. I had no chance to read more, for she was coming, and I could not let her suspect I had seen anything. But I made my plans from that moment. I told her that I was called away on a sudden business trip. As I expected, as soon as I was off, she started for Waynscott. I followed her, in this disguise. She went at once to Lawrence’s office, — ”

“ His law office, in the Equity Building? ”

“ Yes. Then she went to Miss Elliott’s. That was on a Monday. Monday night, you will remember, Lawrence killed Fullerton, and the next day he was arrested. That stopped their plans,

whatever they were. She has kept her room at Miss Elliott's, and I took this house, which happened to be vacant, so that I could keep a close watch on her. She has never gone out. Dr. Barry has been to see her, as you know. I have had Phillips get a daily report from Barry, under color of wiring to me.

"Then you came along, Mr. Lyon. I had seen and heard enough to know that you were a friend of Lawrence's, so I took you in, because I wanted to know everything about him that I could. And I knew that for some reason you were watching Grace. Phillips had tracked you there several times, and he followed you into the florist's shop and got possession of Grace's order for unlimited flowers to be sent to Lawrence. Her flowers for him! I wonder I have kept my senses. But I could do nothing but wait until Lawrence was released, — as Grace was waiting over there for his release! You needn't pretend to be surprised, — you know yourself the connection between them, — that's why you have been keeping a watch on her, — I saw that from the room you selected, —"

"You are quite right as to that, though I think you are quite wrong as to other things."

"What other things?"

"About Lawrence. He isn't that sort of a man. If anyone had a hold upon Mrs. Broughton, it would seem to have been Fullerton."

“Fullerton!”

“You have been very frank, Mr. Broughton, and it is only fair that I should be equally frank. We have been very anxious to have an interview with Mrs. Broughton as soon as her health would permit, Howell and I, because we have reason to believe that she may be able to throw some light upon the Fullerton murder. She may be wanted as a witness.”

“You are mad, — utterly mad,” gasped Broughton. “What could she possibly know about that?”

“She was with Fullerton when he left the Wellington at eight o’clock.”

“I don’t believe it!”

“I don’t think there can be much question about that. She had obviously been to consult him on some legal matters. But, frankly, we only know enough to make it very important we should know more. And we have been very anxious to avoid publicity, if possible, for her own sake, and possibly for Lawrence’s.”

Poor Broughton looked dazed. “I don’t understand. Fullerton was her lawyer, — ”

“Yes.”

“And you think she was with him when Lawrence killed him?”

“We are in hopes that she may be able to explain what did actually happen. She certainly was with Fullerton earlier in the evening. Be-

yond that we don't *know* anything, and we really haven't even a coherent theory."

"But it was Lawrence with whom she was corresponding, — it was Lawrence who had wanted to marry her and who would not go to her wedding, — it was Lawrence who came to see her as soon as my back was turned!"

Lyon shook his head. "You don't know what lies under all that. Fullerton may have had some hold on her, and Lawrence may have been acting as her friend merely. Ah, here is Howell. He will tell us what to do now."

Howell had had time to adjust his mind to the facts Lyon had telephoned, and when he came in he seemed more curious regarding the personality of the famous man before him than anything else. Lyon explained briefly what he had told Broughton about the situation.

"Well now, Mr. Broughton, you know as much as we do," said Howell. "You see that it is highly important we should get at Mrs. Broughton's testimony. Barry has been keeping me off, so this young man evolved a somewhat fantastic plan of getting inside information as to her condition. I hope the code has missed fire, somehow, for it would be exceedingly unfortunate if the prosecution should get hold of her before we do. It is quite on the cards, Mr. Broughton, that we may want you to take your wife away, — quite out of reach as a witness. It depends on

what she has to tell us, — and that we must find out as soon as possible.”

“How, — if she is gone?”

“That is the first thing for us to ascertain. Lyon, you must take me over to Miss Elliott’s School at once. We want to find out all we can, and immediately. If I may make a suggestion, Mr. Broughton, you will await our return here instead of accompanying us. It may possibly prove that your disguise should not be disclosed at this juncture.”

Broughton did not demur. He was obviously too much overwhelmed by the uncertainties of the situation to take the initiative in any direction.

“Don’t be long,” he said, with a wistfulness that sat strangely on his heavy features. “If she has really gone, I must know it. I must have the police search the town for her at once.”

Howell and Lyon walked away leaving him standing in the doorway, looking after them in helpless impotence.

“That complicates things,” said Howell.

Lyon nodded.

“If there is any connection between Lawrence and Mrs. Broughton —”

“There isn’t, of the sort he thinks.”

“If there is *any* connection, it may supply the motive for the assault on Fullerton. I’m afraid we aren’t going to get much help for our side

from this interview, but I'd rather know the worst than be tied up in ignorance."

"If Mrs. Broughton will talk!"

"Well, we shall soon see," said Howell, as he rang Miss Elliott's bell.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement about the place that struck Lyon as soon as they were admitted to Miss Elliott's. There was a sound of voices, of shutting doors, that was like the buzz of an excited hive. The maid who took their cards for Mrs. Broughton looked startled and hesitating, but departed on her errand without remark.

"She's gone all right," murmured Lyon to his companion.

In a moment Miss Elliott appeared, severe and formal and angular as ever, but with a nervous flutter in her voice that told its own story to Lyon's quick ear.

"It is impossible for Mrs. Broughton to receive visitors," she said. "The maid brought your cards to me, but I am authorized to say that Mrs. Broughton cannot see anyone."

"It is a matter of some importance, — a legal matter," said Howell.

Miss Elliott shook her head. "I am sorry, — it is impossible."

"Do you mean that she has not yet returned?" asked Lyon, gently.

Miss Elliott turned to him with a start. "Do you mean that you have seen her? Oh, where was she? When was it? Why did she go?"

"I have not seen her. I heard that she had been able to go out, and so hoped that she might be strong enough to grant us an interview. She had asked me to call in regard to a certain matter in which she was interested. Do I understand she is out this afternoon?"

Miss Elliott threw out her hands with a gesture of despair. "I do not know where she is, — where she went or when. She has simply gone without a word. And she was hardly able to walk across the room alone. I am wild about it. Where could she have gone? And why should she go secretly? I think she must have wandered off in a delirium. And I dare not start an inquiry, for she *may* return at any moment, and she was so anxious to have nothing said about her visit here. But she has been so ill. With every moment that passes I feel more alarmed and more helpless."

"When did she go?" asked Lyon. "You may count on us to help you in any possible way, Miss Elliott. Give us all the information that you can about her departure."

"I went out myself this afternoon at two o'clock. The maid says that a man called to see Mrs. Broughton about half an hour later. He sent a note to her, but no card. She asked to

have him come to her private sitting room, and he was there perhaps fifteen minutes. Then he left. When I came home, at four o'clock, I went at once to her room, and found it empty. She has not left her room before since she came, — she has been too ill. She is not in the house. I have myself gone all through it. She must have dressed and gone out sometime during the afternoon, when no one happened to be in the hall. But I cannot understand it. And I don't know what to do."

"Do nothing at present, madam. And say nothing to anyone about it. I will have a search instituted quietly, so that if she should not return of her own accord, we shall soon know, at any rate, where she is," said Howell. "Can you give us any information about the man who called?"

"None."

"No one saw him?"

"No one but the maid, and she is not observing. I have questioned her. She could give no description of him."

"Well, we must do the best we can without it. I shall take pleasure in letting you know as soon as we have anything to report," said Howell, rising to depart.

Lyon had left his hat and gloves on the hat-rack in the hall. As he took up his gloves, he felt something crinkle inside one of them, and he knew instantly that Kittie had sent him a message.

"That girl is a born intrigante," he laughed to himself, with a sudden thrill that was curiously tender, for all his amusement. As soon as they were outside he unfolded the little note.

"The man who came to see her was small and thin, and wore an old dark blue coat. He had a bald spot on the top of his head, and a wart on his nose. He walks on tiptoe. I hate a man who walks on tiptoe. She went away in a hurry, for she didn't take her comb or brush or anything. Oh, I'm just wild to know what is happening. Is it anything mysterious?"

Lyon read the note to Howell.

"That man was Bede," he said, seriously.

"No question about that. Now, why did she go? Because Bede persuaded her to hide, or because he frightened her into hiding on her own account? And is Bede going to produce her or isn't he? I never ran up against so many blind alleys in one case in my life. There were apparently just three people who knew what happened that night, — Fullerton, Lawrence, and Mrs. Broughton. Fullerton is dead, Mrs. Broughton is lost, and Lawrence will not talk. I wonder if this will unseal his tongue. I think I shall have to see him at once."

"We'll have to report to Broughton first. That poor man is on my mind."

"Very well, we'll go there first. My chief anxiety regarding him is that he'll give the whole

thing away to the police. He is too accustomed to having his own way about things."

They walked around the block to Broughton's home, and found him waiting for them. He fairly went wild when he heard their report. He was for telephoning the police, printing posters, sending a town crier around to make proclamation, — anything and everything, and all at once. His wife was lost, and the resources of the universe must be requisitioned to get her back.

"Go slow," said Lyon. "Mrs. Broughton is not a child. She hasn't been kidnapped and she isn't lost. She is hiding somewhere. She had money and she is accustomed to traveling. I think you may feel reasonably sure that she is safe. Speaking for Lawrence, we are anxious to find her, but speaking for her, it may be just as well that she should not be found until after the grand jury has adjourned."

"What do you mean?" demanded Broughton, fiercely.

"She knows more about the Fullerton murder than it would be agreeable for her to tell in court."

"You are mad," gasped Broughton.

"Why does she disappear, as soon as she knows that Bede has connected her with the affairs of that night?"

Broughton walked the floor. Then he stopped abruptly before Howell.

"I wish that you would call up the county jail

and find out if she has been there to see Lawrence. You can find out hypothetically, without giving names, you know."

"That isn't a bad idea," said Howell. He went to the telephone and inquired whether anyone had been admitted to see Lawrence that afternoon. The answer, when he repeated it to the others, seemed significant.

"A woman tried to see him a little after five, but when she found that she would have to give her name and submit to search, she went away without disclosing her identity. She wore a heavy veil, a short sealskin coat, and a dark dress. General appearance of a lady."

Broughton dropped his eyes to the floor and a look of sullen anger displaced the anxiety that had racked his features.

"I shall have an account to settle with Mr. Lawrence when he is out of jail," he muttered, savagely.

"In the meantime, our efforts are all directed to getting him out," said Howell. "And since I cannot use Mrs. Broughton as a witness, I am as well content that she is out of Bede's reach, also. I will go down to see Lawrence at once, and if I can get any information from him that will interest you in this connection, I shall let you know. I think that is all that we can do to-night."

"I'd like to go with you, when you visit Lawrence," said Lyon, quietly.

Howell considered a moment, and then nodded. Perhaps he thought that another influence might be more successful than his own in unlocking the confidence of his client.

Lawrence tossed aside the book which he had been reading, and rose to greet them with all of his old light-hearted self-possession.

"Delighted to see you! I've been reading Persian love-poems till my brains are whirling around like the song of a tipsy bulbul, so I am particularly in need of some intelligent conversation. Howell, you look as glum as though you were attorney for a wretched fellow who had no chance of escaping the gallows. I'm glad you have Lyon associated with you. I've more faith in his abilities than in yours." And he shot a dancing glance at Lyon which was not wholly mockery.

"My abilities are at least equal to the facts that have been given them to work up," said Howell, drily. "I came to ask you what you can tell me about Mrs. Broughton's visit to Waynscott."

Lawrence's eyes widened with surprise. "Mrs. Broughton! What in the name of wonder are you bringing her name in for?"

"She visited your office that day."

"Yes."

"What for?"

Lawrence shook his head. "It was a professional visit. I can't discuss the matter."

"I rather expected you to say that. But the matter comes up in this way. Lyon, here, has identified Mrs. Broughton with the woman who was seen with Fullerton that evening. He may be wrong, of course. But if he is right, it may be helpful to know what she wanted, first from you and then from him."

Lawrence did not look at Lyon this time. His eyes, swept clear of all expression, were fixed upon Howell in calm attention.

"Why not ask her?" he said.

"She has been ill, — too ill to be disturbed, Dr. Barry has insisted. This afternoon she disappeared. Bede had been to see her a short time before. Now, what bearing, so far as you know, does this have upon the case?"

Lawrence dropped his eyes, which had been fixed intently upon the speaker, and remained silent for some moments. Lyon, watching him, felt perfectly satisfied that the facts presented were all new to him, and that his mind was now trying to fit them into the theory of the crime which he had before entertained, and that his hesitation in answering was due to his caution. At last he said,

"I cannot throw any light on the subject. I did not see Mrs. Broughton after she left my office in the morning."

"Was her business of such a nature that she would have been likely to consult Fullerton about it?"

Lawrence frowned. "She might have done so. Women never keep to the rules of the game."

"You had warned her not to consult him personally?"

Lawrence smiled satirically into Howell's eyes. "What are you trying to find out?"

"Whether her business with Fullerton was of a nature to rouse her to desperation, if she failed."

"Nonsense!" Lawrence exclaimed. Then, more slowly and thoughtfully, "Out of the question. Mrs. Broughton is a shy and timid woman, and anything like desperation in her case would react upon herself, not on anyone else. You are clear off the track, Howell."

"You admit, however, that she might have been made desperate?"

"I admit nothing whatsoever. If I knew anything I wouldn't admit it. Or I'll admit that I don't know anything, if that will pacify you."

"Where would she be likely to go? You know her friends."

Lawrence shook his head. "If she was bent on hiding herself, she would not be likely to go to the likely places."

And with that Howell had to depart. As usual, his client had given him no information

that would be of the slightest value in conducting the defense.

Lyon lingered when Howell had departed.

"There is another matter I want to tell you about," he said. "I had an interview with Miss Wolcott yesterday."

The flash of Lawrence's eyes was electric. "Out with it, you tongue-tied wretch," he cried. "Lord, that such privileges should fall to a man who doesn't know better than to waste time in wordy preambles. Tell me every syllable she said, every look that she didn't put into syllables. To think that you have been sitting here for half an hour with all that treasure locked up inside of you! Confound you, why don't you begin? Begin at the beginning, and omit nothing."

Lyon began, and told all of his tale. Lawrence listened with an attentiveness that seemed to meet the words half way and drag them out into expression. He had forgotten himself entirely, and his anger at her distress, his rage at Fullerton, his amazed and awed wonder when he heard that shame over her girlish folly in writing her heart out to a man unworthy of it had made her deaf to all other wooing, were as plainly revealed as though he had put them into his most voluble English. At the end he dropped his face upon his folded arms on the table.

"The poor child," he murmured to himself. "The poor child! As though that—or any-

thing — would have made any difference!" Suddenly he wheeled upon Lyon, with dancing eyes. "Maybe you are thinking that this is an upper room in the county jail, and that I am a forlorn wretch with a good prospect of being hung! Never think it, my boy! There is nothing in all the universe so heaven-wide and free as this room. I know now how a man feels when his reprieve comes."

"But your reprieve hasn't come yet," said Lyon quietly. "That is exactly the point. Do you see any way yet in which I can help it to come?"

Lawrence looked at him silently, smilingly, and shook his head.

"Then it makes no difference in your attitude," pursued Lyon, "that Mrs. Broughton — and not anyone else — is shown to be the woman who was with Fullerton that evening?"

"It makes no difference," said Lawrence, quietly.

"Not even if she should prove to be the woman who ran across the street?"

"Is that your idea?" exclaimed Lawrence, in frank surprise. "Oh, you are on the wrong track. It was not she."

"But — if it was?"

Lawrence walked back and forth thoughtfully. Then he stopped again before Lyon.

"It would make no difference," he said. Then

with a smile he placed his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Believe me, Lyon, I appreciate your interest and your earnestness, but — beware of letting it carry you too far. There are times, you know, when the best service a friend can render is simply to keep hands off. If you start in with an idea of proving things you may possibly — prove too much! There are matters that simply must not be brought into question." He shook Lyon in friendly roughness and let him go.

When Lyon came out, the early night had already fallen and shadows lay heavy in the corners beyond the reach of the street lamps. Lyon glanced at the sky, and then, instead of going to Hemlock Avenue, he took his way to the Wellington.

CHAPTER XVIII

LYON'S first intention had been to wait until the house was quiet that night before attempting to carry out his plan of burglarizing Fullerton's apartment, but after the developments of the afternoon he felt that it was unwise to risk even an hour's delay. Bede was too active to be allowed much headway. As he made his preparations, he could not help reflecting with amusement on the way in which fate was using him. Here was he, a newspaper man, bending every energy to keep this affair out of the papers; a law-abiding man, working to frustrate the efforts of the officers of the law; an averagely moral man, deliberately planning to commit technical burglary. If he should be caught in his efforts, he might find himself in jail beside Lawrence. And to be arrested for attempted burglary was somehow less dignified than to be arrested for murder! There are delicate shades in crime that appeal to the sensibilities of the artist. However, he was in for it, and though the situation might appeal to his philosophical nature as

full of paradox, he had no intention of modifying his plans.

It was eight o'clock when he got into the room which he had taken in the Wellington. He had got his keys from Hunt and mentioned casually that he was going out later in the evening. It was a cloudy, moonless night, and though the street lamps spread a diffused light through the air everywhere, the rear of the Wellington was as much in the shadow as it was possible for any place in the city to be. A jutting angle of the wall, in which there were no windows, gave him further protection in his venture.

He fastened one end of his rope ladder securely on the inside ledge of his window, and then dropped it down. It reached just to Fullerton's window on the floor below. Cautiously Lyon went down the frail support. It was a windy night and the gusts that came around the corner tossed the free end of the ladder wildly, but his weight steadied it, and though he swayed dizzily for a few minutes, he soon swung down to a point where he could get a footing on the broad window ledge of Fullerton's room. He had come prepared to cut out a piece of glass opposite the window catch, but as he put his hand upon it he felt it yield, and to his surprise and very much to his relief he found that he could push the sash up. This not only would save time, but it would enable him to cover his trail more effectively.

Curiosity made him pause, even in his hurry, to examine the catch, and he found that, through a shrinkage of the wood, the snap on the lower sash did not reach to lock into the upper. It looked locked, but it did not catch. It would be possible, therefore, for him to leave it still apparently locked from the inside when leaving.

He fastened the end of his ladder so that it would not blow out of his reach, and then pulled down the window and drew the curtains to exclude the light. Only then did he venture to strike a match and to turn on the nearest gas-jet. He remembered the general arrangement of the room very well from his former visit. Here was the large square writing table in the middle of the room, and there, to the right of it on the floor, was the rug Hunt had spoken of, where the letters lay. Lyon sat down before the table and studied the arrangement quietly. A man sitting here could toss the letters to the rug easily with a careless flip of his right hand, but a letter would not of itself fall from the table to the rug. Even if blown from the table by a strong gust from the open window, — an idea that he had had in his mind as a possibility, — it would not be apt to fall upon the rug. The direct line would carry it to one side. For the present he would eliminate the table.

Where else could the letters have been placed, so as to fall upon the rug? Assuming that Ful-

lerton had written them the last evening he was in the room, and had either forgotten to leave them for mailing, or had laid them aside for some reason when his caller arrived, where would he have been apt to leave them? Lyon took his position on the rug and studied the various pieces of furniture which lay in unobstructed lines from that point. There was a small table against the wall, and on it a circular pipe tray with an array of pipes. Above it, fastened against the wall at a height which a man could reach only if standing, was a small Chinese cabinet, carved in the semblance of a dragon, and gleaming with scarlet and gold. Like the serpent-marked note paper, it bore witness to Fullerton's fantastic taste. It would be quite in keeping with his habits for him to use this as a repository for his letters. Lyon walked over to examine it. It opened readily at his touch. The inside of the cabinet was filled with tobacco-jars. He tried to lift it from the wall, but it was too securely fastened to make this easy. But the idea that this was and must be the place where Fullerton had deposited Miss Wolcott's letters had now taken possession of him, and stepping up on a chair he examined the cabinet closely on all sides. From that point he at once saw what he had not noticed before, that on one side, near the bottom, was a crack, and the white corner of an envelope was plainly visible. With the help of his penknife he pulled it out.

It was addressed to Fullerton in a delicate hand. There was at least no more mystery as to how the letters had reached the rug. Evidently Fullerton had placed them, at some time, for some purpose, in this cabinet, and they had been shaken loose at the dramatically opportune moment when Hunt found them. Probably the jarring of the wall when the furniture in this upper apartment had been moved out had helped to dislodge them, or perhaps they occasionally slipped out even when Fullerton was there, without exciting suspicions of supernatural agency. The letters he wanted were probably inside.

He again examined the cabinet within and without, and though he could find no secret drawer, he saw, by the shallowness of the space within as compared with the depth on the outside, that there must be a drawer beneath the compartment where the tobacco jars reposed. Well, if needs must — He inserted the strongest blade of his knife and pried open the whole side, — not so difficult a task as one might have supposed, for the delicate wood of the cabinet had not been expected to resist the dry heat of a modern apartment house, and it was badly cracked at several points. As the side came loose in his hands, he saw that under the ostensible interior was a shallow drawer filled with packages of letters, longer documents, and note books. He gathered the whole mass together, and tied it hastily into a bundle in his

silk neckerchief. Then, with a view to Bede's possible explorations, he carefully pressed the loose side back into place.

At that moment he heard through the silence the metallic rattle of the elevator. Someone was stopping at this floor. Hastily concluding that it was wiser to make his escape unseen, if possible, with the booty which he had already secured than to risk discovery by lingering on the chance of finding more, Lyon softly turned out the gas, and made his escape by the window, carrying his knotted kerchief like an emigrant's bundle in his hand. He pulled the window down behind him and climbed up his ladder to his own room. As he leaned out to pull up his rope ladder, a sudden gleam of light shot out into the night from the window below. Bede was in Fullerton's room.

Lyon's heart was jumping, partly from the unusual physical exertion, partly from the excitement. He stood still for a moment, considering whether he should examine his find here and now, or try to make his escape from the building with it before he opened the bundle. He had suddenly a panicky feeling that Bede might appear at any moment and demand his papers. Had he really covered his tracks, or had he left some perfectly obvious clue for the detective to follow? His rope ladder lay in a heap at his feet. He rolled it up and poked it into the bottom of his bag, and then, taking courage, he opened up his bun-

dle. The first thing that fell out was a good-sized package, neatly wrapped and sealed, and superscribed,

“This package is to be delivered to Edith Wolcott’s husband on his wedding day, with the compliments and congratulations of

“WARREN FULLERTON.”

Lyon smiled grimly as he slipped the package into his pocket. There was little doubt as to the contents of the sealed packet, and with the recovery of those unhappy love-letters, his immediate object had been most perfectly accomplished. He glanced at his watch. It was not yet nine. He might be so fortunate as to be admitted yet, and to save her even one night of the oppression which he had witnessed would be worth much. He hastily packed the balance of his trophy into his bag without examining it, and made his way out of the apartment and out of the building. Taking the staircase instead of the elevator, he felt reasonably sure that his departure had been unobserved, and so indeed it proved.

When he reached Hemlock Avenue the lights were still burning in Miss Wolcott’s house, and it was Miss Wolcott herself who, after a little delay, opened the door in answer to his ring. It struck him that she looked less mistress of herself than usual. She had a startled, not to say nervous, air.

"I hoped it might be you," she said. "Come to the library." And she led the way into the room where a dancing fire blazed upon the hearth.

"I only stopped for a moment, to bring you this package," said Lyon. "If you wouldn't mind, I wish that you would open it, so that you can tell me whether or not it contains the letters you spoke of the other evening."

She took the package from him with a startled look but without a word, — a characteristic of hers which he was coming to understand. He turned away and picked up a book on the table, to withdraw his presence from her as much as possible, as she tore open the wrappings. Then he heard her give a gasping sigh, and he turned quickly toward her. She had sunk into the chair before the fire, and with her hands before her face she was sobbing with a childish abandon that was so poignant it brought a catch into Lyon's throat, even though he saw that her tears were tears of relief and joy. Scattered on the floor at her feet, where they had slipped from her trembling fingers, were dozens of little letters, — the dainty little notes of a young girl's inscribing. Like the fallen petals of blossoms that had been torn down by a harsh wind, they lay in pathetic disorder, witnessing to a beauty that had been and was no more. Lyon reached for his hat and moved silently to the door, but at his movement she rose, crushing back her tears with that self

control which had become second nature with her.

"Oh, wait!" she cried, breathlessly. "Don't go yet! Don't leave me alone — with them."

Lyon laughed. "Poor little letters! They look so forlorn. The power to hurt was never in them, — only in a man's wicked mind."

She drew a long, sobbing breath. "Still, — I don't want to touch them! Oh, I have so hated the thought of them all these years, — it seems as though all the world had been lying under the oppression of the fact that they were lurking in the dark, waiting a chance to spring out upon me. Would you mind — would you put them on the fire for me?"

"Certainly," said Lyon, with perfect gravity. He knelt down by the fireplace and gathered the white handfuls up and laid them upon the coals. When the last little envelope had curled up into filmy ash, he rose. She was standing erect before the fire, with a vitality and radiance in every line of her figure that made her like a different being. "Truly, women are beyond all understanding," thought Lyon, as he waited for her next word.

"Thank you," she said, and the simple phrase on her lips seemed like a pæan of thanksgiving. "Now, — one thing more. You know everything, — you are the only one who does. Will you tell Mr. Lawrence about these letters? He

has always been a good friend, and — I should like to have him know ! ”

“ I am sure he will be glad to learn that you will be free from further annoyance and anxiety,” he said, cheerfully. “ But as for my telling him, — suppose instead, I arrange for you to see him yourself to-morrow. It could be done without any publicity, you know, and it would be a god-send to him to have a visit from you. You can't imagine how stupid it is to be in prison. A visit from *anyone* would be a welcome diversion ! ”

She looked thoughtful and abstracted.

“ To-morrow ? ” she hesitated. “ I don't know. I may not be at home to-morrow.”

“ Well, — the day after, if you must postpone it.”

“ I'll send you word,” she said, after a moment. He thought a shadow had crossed her face, but it might only have been a shadow of thought. When he again reached for his hat, she put out both hands impulsively.

“ However things turn out, — other things,” she said, somewhat incoherently, “ I shall never, never forget what you have done for me. You have given me back myself.”

Lyon smiled to himself as he left her. How long would she keep possession of that gift, if Lawrence were only free ?

CHAPTER XIX

THE radiance of Miss Wolcott's face was still lingering in Lyon's mind and diffusing a glow over his imagination when he crossed the few steps that separated her house from Broughton's. Broughton opened the door for him, as he had formed the habit of doing. The anguished and despairing inquiry in his eyes pulled Lyon up sharply. He had come from the morning to night, from the hope of youth to the sorrow of age, from those whose story was to end happily to those who knew in their own hearts the tragedy of life.

"You have nothing to tell me?" Broughton asked, though his tone showed he expected nothing.

Lyon shook his head, "No. You have heard nothing?"

"Nothing. Nothing. Nothing."

From habit he led Lyon into the dining room, where they had always sat to smoke before retiring, but the room showed no preparations for an evening of good cheer. It was as blank and forlorn as Broughton's face.

"*Where* can she be?" he demanded, stopping in his restless walk to face Lyon imperiously. "Ill as she was, with God knows what trouble on her mind and conscience, where can she have gone? Did she feel that it was impossible to live? Did she go to her death, — or to hide and wait for *him*?"

"If you mean Lawrence, that's all nonsense," said Lyon, calmly. "I may tell you now — there were reasons why I couldn't before — that Lawrence is deeply in love with Miss Wolcott, who lives next door, and she returns his sentiment. I am satisfied that their formal engagement will be announced as soon as he is cleared of this accusation."

"What of that?" said Broughton dully. "He may be playing with a dozen women for all I know."

"He isn't that sort."

"He is the sort that keeps up a secret correspondence with another man's wife, and lures her from her home and her husband. That I know, and knowing that I can't believe very much good of him in other ways. *He* knows where my wife is now."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, he will know before I do," said Broughton, sullenly. "She has fled because she was connected with that affair in some way. It is even possible that she discovered I was watch-

ing. And if she hasn't destroyed herself, she has gone where she can wait for him."

Lyon felt helpless. The unreason of jealousy comes so near to insanity that argument and common sense are helpless before it. It can only be mastered by authority or by an appeal to the emotions, and Lyon did not feel himself in position to offer either to a man of Woods Broughton's age and personal force.

"Well, good night," he said lamely. "I'm going to bed."

"Go," said Broughton. "There is no reason why you should not sleep. I shall not sleep until I know where she is. Good God, this very minute she may be a helpless prisoner in some terrible den of infamy. She may be suffering, — though she cannot suffer as I do."

Lyon got away from him and went up to the little back bedroom which had come to seem so homelike in the short week he had been there. Kittie's curtains were both down — of course. Her faithfulness to their code even to this disastrous end struck him as pathetic.

"Dear little girl," he murmured, and blew a kiss across the night to her. One can venture so much more in the night than in the unsympathetic blaze of common day.

How much farther he might have gone on his excursion into sentiment can only be guessed, for just then his eye was caught and his mind di-

verted by something which, in a moment, took on more than a momentary importance. It was nothing more portentous than a lighted window in Miss Wolcott's home. The curious thing about it was that he had never seen a light in that second-story window before. Every evening when he had looked for Kittie's signal, Miss Wolcott's house had presented a perfectly blank and unob-servant side to his view. Now some one was occupying a room which corresponded with his own room in this neighboring house. While his eye lingered on the light in idle speculation, he saw and distinctly recognized Miss Wolcott as she passed between the window and the light in the room. The sight was not in itself startling and yet he started and metaphorically rubbed his eyes. *Miss Wolcott wore a hat.* Instinctively he looked at his watch. It lacked a few minutes of eleven. Eleven o'clock in Waynscott was an hour when respectable householders went to bed, unless they went on a journey. Was it possible that Miss Wolcott was going out, alone and unattended, at this hour? He had the greatest confidence in the innocence of her intentions, whatever they were, but the story which she had told had not given him the same prejudice in favor of her discretion. What foolish plan might she have in her mind now? Why had she said nothing of her intention when he left her an hour ago? Distinctly worried, he reached for the overcoat and hat which

he had thrown down on a chair in his room, and then went back to the window. If she was really bent on a midnight errand, he would escort her, whether she liked it or not. He would quietly watch for the moment of her departure, and then join her at her own front door.

But while he waited, another head crossed the lighted field of the window, — not Miss Wolcott's. She was not going alone, then, for this woman also wore a hat, and about her neck was the graceful line of an upturned fur collar. He did not know Miss Wolcott's friends, — he knew, indeed, very few women in Waynscott, — and yet something teasingly familiar about the lift of the head, the turn of the neck, puzzled him. Did he know her?

And then suddenly, the solution of it all flashed upon him. That delicately turned head belonged to Mrs. Broughton. Dolt, idiot, that he was, not to have reasoned it out before!

Mrs. Broughton, fleeing from Miss Elliott's by way of the secret panel in the fence, had taken shelter at Miss Wolcott's. What more natural? What more simple? And now, under cover of the night, she was preparing to continue her flight. In a flash, without waiting for logical processes, Lyon saw what he must do.

He hurled himself downstairs three steps at a time and out of the front hall. As he had expected, a carriage was waiting before Miss Wol-

cott's door. He went up to the driver, ostentatiously looking at his watch.

"When does the train leave?" he asked.

"Eleven forty-five," the man answered.

"Oh, then there is time enough," he said easily, and ran back to the house.

Broughton, who had been startled by Lyon's noisy run through the hall, was awaiting him at the front door.

"What's up?" he asked.

Lyon realized that the moment had come for the autocratic dominance of the sane mind. He put his hand impressively on Broughton's shoulder and faced him sternly, imperiously.

"Mr. Broughton, if I could put you at this moment face to face with your wife, what would be your attitude toward her?"

"What do you mean?" gasped Broughton, too bewildered by this new manner to really grasp Lyon's words.

"Would you meet her with accusation, doubt, and coldness? Or will you hide that unworthy side of your thought and let her see the love that you really feel?"

Broughton's face darkened.

"If she can satisfy my doubts —"

"She must never know them! And this for your sake more than hers. Think, man. How will you go through the years that lie before you if you must spend them with the constant knowl-

edge that you once failed her, that she knows it, and that she can nevermore be proud of you or sure of you? You will have made it necessary for her to forgive you. Can you stand the humiliation of that knowledge?"

"She to forgive me?" stammered Broughton. "For what?"

"For doubting her. You should have believed in her against every appearance. If you want to hold your head up before her, never let her know what traitorous doubts you have harbored."

"How do you know that they are traitorous?" asked Broughton, struggling for a grip on his past passions.

"Because — now listen and understand exactly what this means, — because your wife, when she fled from Miss Elliott's, took refuge with Miss Wolcott, who is Lawrence's fiancée. Can you believe for the thousandth part of an instant that she would have gone to that girl if there was anything between her and Lawrence? It is unthinkable. Now hold that one fact firmly, — do not forget it for a moment, — and come with me to your wife."

He crushed Broughton's hat upon the bewildered man's head and dragged him out and across the dividing yards to Miss Wolcott's door. The whole episode had only taken a few moments, but he breathed more freely when he had

actually got Broughton to the steps of the other house before the women came out. There was no time to spare, however. The doorknob turned softly. The door opened noiselessly and the two women stood there, cloaked and veiled, ready to set forth. Instead, Lyon drew Broughton inside, as though the door had been opened for the purpose of admitting them.

"I must beg that you give me a few moments, Miss Wolcott," Lyon began.

But the need of making any explanation was taken from him. The lady who at their first appearance had shrunk back of Miss Wolcott, suddenly gave a little inarticulate cry and threw herself upon Broughton's breast.

"Woods! Oh, Woods! Where did you come from?" she cried and burst into tears.

Lyon held his breath in suspense, but it is not in masculine nature to thrust away a beautiful sobbing woman. Broughton's arms lifted to enclose her, and his voice murmured, not ungently: "There, there, Grace! Control yourself!"

Lyon turned to Miss Wolcott, trying to leave the reunited husband and wife in as much privacy as the situation admitted.

"What was your plan? Where were you going?" he asked, urgently.

She had thrown back her veil, and her face was pale, but resolute.

"We were trying to escape," she said.

"From whom?"

"That terrible detective. He had found Mrs. Broughton. He went to see her yesterday and told her —" She stopped abruptly, and a shudder shook her visibly.

"What did he tell her? In charity, let me know."

"He told her she would have to appear as a witness at the trial and give testimony against me."

"Against you!" The room reeled before Lyon's eyes, but he pulled himself together. "Let me dismiss your carriage and then you must tell me what you mean. It was wild of you to try to run away. In the first place, you would not be able to take any train without being stopped. The police know of Mrs. Broughton's disappearance and are watching all outgoing trains, of course. Besides, — but let us dispose of the carriage, first."

He went to the door and dismissed the coachman. As he came back, he saw that Broughton had disengaged his wife's arms and was facing her with that jealous sternness in his eyes that Lyon had dreaded.

"But to leave my home secretly, at the urging of — of — of *anyone*, was not what I have a right to expect of my wife. I have reason to demand an explanation."

The tears were still sparkling on Mrs. Brough-

ton's lashes, but she looked up at him with a steady glance.

"I am not your wife," she said quietly.

CHAPTER XX

THE surprising statement made by Mrs. Broughton was in fact so surprising that it was difficult for her hearers to grasp at once what was involved in it.

“What do you mean?” asked Broughton. But already the sternness of the righteous judge began to drain away from his face, leaving instead the uneasiness of the lover who has no ground on which to make a claim of rights. “You say — what do you mean?”

That she meant something was very clear, and Lyon, glancing swiftly at Miss Wolcott, saw that to her, at least, the meaning was quite plain. She was troubled, anxious, but not surprised. Indeed, it was she who now took the situation in hand.

“If you will come into the library, we can talk without arousing my grandfather,” she said, in guarded tones. “If he hears voices he will come down, and then —”

It was unnecessary to complete the sentence. They followed her into the library, and she closed

the great doors softly. Broughton was still looking dazed. Mrs. Broughton, who had not spoken since she made the startling declaration that she was not his wife, sank into a low chair. Her eyes were lowered and her hands were pressed hard together, but there was steadiness and self-control in her attitude. Lyon drew a little apart where he could observe them both.

"Are you strong enough to tell them your story, or shall I?" asked Edith Wolcott, quietly.

"No, no, I must tell him. That at least is his right — and mine," Mrs. Broughton answered quickly. She freed herself from her wraps, and turned toward Woods Broughton. During all that followed she looked straight at him, talked to him. The others in the room did not seem to enter her consciousness. It was obvious that her one concern was to be understood by the man she loved.

"When you first met me," she said, "you knew that though I was not living with my husband, there was no legal separation. He had been away from me so long that I did not think of him very often, and had long ceased to consider that I had any wifely obligations to him. But legally I was his wife."

"You got a divorce before we were married," said Broughton, staring at her.

She went on with her story as though he had not spoken.



“HER EYES WERE LOWERED AND HER HANDS WERE PRESSED
CLOSE TOGETHER.”

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"The only ground on which I could obtain a divorce under the laws of this state was that of desertion. Do you understand? I could make no other charge against him. Unless I could secure a separation on that ground, I could not get one at all. I could not marry again."

"Yes, but he had been away twelve years. That surely was sufficient."

"He had been away twelve years, but—he did not wish to give me an opportunity to get my freedom. So—he wrote to me from time to time."

"He wrote to you! What of that?"

"It was enough to defeat the claim of desertion. He would always offer to provide a home for me if I would come and live with him. He did not expect me to consider it, or, I am sure, wish me to, but he took the attitude of willingness, so as to forestall any attempt I might make to set myself free. He made the same offer, ironically as I well knew, when he first went away. He renewed it whenever he wrote. I did not understand at the time what his object was. I thought it only a petty form of annoyance. But when I went to Arthur Lawrence to ask him to take up the matter of my divorce, I found out what William's purpose had been. His letters made it technically impossible for me to assert that he had deserted me."

"Wait a moment. You say you went to Ar-

thur Lawrence. It was Warren Fullerton who conducted your suit."

"After Arthur had refused to take it. He told me that under the circumstances I could not sustain the charge of desertion without — without perjury. He tried to persuade me to follow some other course, and when I persisted he refused to act for me."

Broughton was leaning forward, following every word with absorbed attention. His eyes never left her face.

"How did Lawrence know about these letters?" he asked.

"William always sent them under cover to Arthur. He wanted to make sure, not only that I received them, but that Arthur should know I received them, so that he could call upon him to testify to the fact if he should ever wish to. All this I have learned since. Then I only knew that Arthur saw a legal difficulty and refused to prepare the papers."

"Was that his only reason for opposing your divorce? There was no — personal feeling?"

"Personal feeling? Why, no, how could there be? He would have been glad to help me. He always disliked William. But he foresaw trouble, and advised me earnestly to wait until some other plan could be considered. I would not, and went to Mr. Fullerton."

She shuddered involuntarily as she mentioned

the name, but after only an instant's pause went on.

"From what I had learned from Arthur about the law of the case, I determined to say nothing to him about the letters. I told him that William had left me twelve years before and never been heard from, and on that statement the divorce was granted without difficulty. Then you and I were married."

She paused, but they all felt that it was only to gather strength to go on, and no one spoke.

"The first intimation I had that there was going to be trouble came a year ago last summer. Mr. Fullerton was in New York and he came to see me. He wanted money. I could not understand at first, but he soon made it unmistakably clear. He had found out about the letters, and he said that the divorce was therefore fraudulent and without effect, and my marriage void."

Her voice fluttered as though, in spite of her will, it was slipping away from her control. Broughton groaned.

"Why didn't you tell me, Grace? Good heavens, that was a matter for a man to deal with."

"I didn't dare. I was afraid to have you know, I was afraid of the scandal,—of your scorn,—of everything. I was simply terrified out of my senses. I couldn't think straight. I only wanted to keep it from ever coming out,—to hush it up and keep it unknown. So—I sold

some jewels and paid him the money he wanted and he went away. But I was sick for a month, — do you remember?”

“If you had only told me!”

“But what could you have done? There would have been nothing possible but to put me away, — and the thought of that was worst of all. Or I thought so then.”

Broughton stared. He was just beginning to see the far-reaching effects involved in the situation.

“I hoped the matter was settled,” Mrs. Broughton resumed, “but a few months later I received a letter from him, asking for more money. That was the beginning. They came after that every few months, and I lived in constant dread. He always wrote very politely, very guardedly, but I knew what he meant and I did not dare refuse him.”

“One moment. How had he learned about those letters? From Lawrence?”

“No. William had seen the newspaper reports and had written to him, giving him the facts. So Mr. Fullerton said, and I don’t know how else he could have found out. Arthur would *never* have spoken of it. I got so desperate that finally I wrote to Arthur.”

“Ah!”

“He was the only one who knew the whole case. He knew about the letters, had known

William, and had warned me that William would make trouble, and that I was going to build up unhappiness for myself. I wrote him what had happened. He urged me to tell you frankly the whole situation and to pay Fullerton nothing more. But I could not bring myself to the point of telling you. Perhaps I would if — if you had been as kind as you were at first, but I thought you were growing cold and distant, and — I could not speak. Then you went away on that sudden trip. I thought it would be a good chance to see Arthur and have a talk with him, and perhaps to appeal to Mr. Fullerton's mercy. So I came out here the moment you had gone. Were you surprised to find me gone when you returned?"

"Never mind that now," said Broughton. "Let me get your story straight first, and then I'll give you mine. When you came to Waynscott you went to Lawrence's office first, didn't you? That was Monday forenoon?"

"Yes," she said, looking a little surprised at the form of his question. "I went there, and he was very positive that I must not see Mr. Fullerton. He said he would see him for me and 'settle' him, but I was afraid to let him meet him, — Arthur has a quick temper and he was very angry, — you can't think how angry. You know I have known Arthur Lawrence since a boy. He has really been the best friend a woman ever

could have, and now — Oh, I can't go on. It is so terrible."

"But you must, Grace. It is very important. Tell me exactly what happened and where you went."

"When I left Arthur I went to Miss Elliott's. I knew she would be glad to have me stay with her a few days, and that was all I intended, at that time. I had promised Arthur not to see Mr. Fullerton, but after I left him, it seemed to me that I simply had to have it out with him. I couldn't believe that it would be impossible for me to move him in a personal interview. I found out he lived at the Wellington and went there. He was not in, but the boy said he would be there in the evening, so I went again."

"That was a mad thing to do."

"I was mad. I could think of nothing but my own troubles. And I had so firmly persuaded myself that in a personal interview I could somehow move him to mercy that I took the chances without considering anything else."

It was perhaps an accident, but she glanced at Lyon. He had not moved. Intensely interested as he was in reaching certain points, he knew that to get the story they must let her tell it in her own way, without interruption.

"I did find him. I had a terrible half hour with him. Oh, he was a man to fear. He was polite and smiling, — and hard as ice. He was

not even sarcastic. He did not show any feeling. It was merely a question of money. He said it wasn't pleasant to get money from a woman in this way, but a woman's money was as good as a man's, and since I had money, and since I had put myself in a box where my whole life and reputation were at his mercy, it would be sheer foolishness on his part not to use his opportunity. Those were his very words. Oh, it was right to kill him, — it was right!"

"Grace!" gasped Broughton, half rising. "You don't mean — Good heavens!"

"I did n't kill him," she said, steadily. "But I want you to understand that — that whoever killed him was removing from the earth a cruel, wicked man. I saw I was making no impression on him and I left the Wellington. He was going out that evening, and he accompanied me for a block or two. I told him to leave me, and finally he did. I returned to Miss Elliott's, —"

"Do you know at what hour?" asked Lyon, quickly.

"It was half past eight when I got into my room."

Lyon unconsciously sighed. That statement, if it accorded with the facts, would completely knock out the theory he had cherished so long, based on the assumption that the woman who had fled across the street at ten o'clock was Mrs. Broughton. There was something so convincing

in her manner of telling the details of her story that it was very hard to believe she was not presenting the facts truthfully. Yet certainly it was a curious tangle that had mixed her movements on that evening so confusingly with those of Fullerton and of the other woman who had also been entangled with his murder.

"The next morning," she resumed, "I saw the news of his — death in the papers. You cannot imagine my relief. It was as though a terrible weight had been lifted. I wanted to fly. I was wild with joy. Then, just as I was on the point of returning home, came the news of the arrest of Arthur Lawrence. It was a terrible blow. I felt that he had done it for me — because of what I had told him in the morning, — and that I was really guilty not only of Fullerton's death, — I don't think I should have minded that much, — but of Arthur's. My nerves collapsed under the shock and I could not be moved. Gradually, as I saw how little actual proof there was against him, some composure returned. Perhaps, after all, he might not be convicted. No one but myself knew how angry he had been with Mr. Fullerton that day. I was trying, oh, so hard, to get enough of my strength back to get away, to go somewhere, anywhere, when yesterday a man came to see me, — a Mr. Bede."

"What did he come for?"

"What did he want?"

Lyon and Broughton asked their questions simultaneously, as she paused in her speech.

Mrs. Broughton glanced irresolutely at Edith Wolcott. That self-controlled young woman had been sitting silent, with her chin in her palm, listening to Mrs. Broughton's story with sympathetic attention. It was obvious the story was already well known to her. Now she answered the men's questions.

"Mr. Bede had discovered that Mrs. Broughton was at Fullerton's rooms that evening. It seems he had also discovered or guessed that I was there. He trapped her into admitting that she had seen me in the hall when she left the building with Fullerton. He told her that he would have to have her subpoenaed as a witness, to tell about seeing me. He didn't know that we were old friends, or he would not have said that, perhaps. As soon as he left she came to me, secretly, and told me the whole thing. We decided that the best thing would be to get away from Waynscott, away from the country, until this thing was settled. Now that you have spoiled our plan, what are you going to do with us instead? The responsibility is with you, now!"

"I will take the responsibility of caring for my wife," Broughton said, in a ringing voice. He rose and shook himself, as if throwing off some intolerable burden. "Oh, Grace, Grace, if you

had only told me the whole in the beginning! But I will not blame you now. You have had a terrible time. Now I will try to make it all up to you. We will do anything you like, — go anywhere you like, — ”

“You forget,” she said, quietly, “I cannot go back to you at all. I am not your wife.”

She put her hands up and pressed her fingers hard against her closed eyes.

“All the trouble has come from that, — all the trouble for me first, and now for you, and for poor Arthur in prison and for Edith here. I tried to take what I had no right to and I lied to get it. Oh, do you think I could have laid my whole heart bare to you as I have done tonight if I were not through with all that false claim? I have told you everything as though I were on my deathbed, because I can never see you again. Somewhere in the world, watching his chance to strike, William Vanderburg is waiting. I will never go back to him, — never, so help me God, — but while he lives, I will never dare to take any happiness that may offer. He is biding his time. Oh, I did wrong, but I have paid for it. I am paying now, and will pay over and over every year that I live.”

“Dear Mrs. Broughton,” said Lyon, gently, “I can at least relieve you of that uncertainty. William Vanderburg is dead. I was with him when he died.”

She stared at him for a moment as though she had not understood his words. Then, with a sighing breath, she sank back in a dead faint. This astonishing statement, following the long strain of her confession, was too much for her nerves.

CHAPTER XXI

BROUGHTON lifted the limp form of the fainting woman to a couch while Edith Wolcott brought cold water and sprinkled her face. In a few minutes she showed signs of returning consciousness, and leaving Edith to chafe her hands, Broughton drew Lyon out into the hall.

“Is that straight about Vanderburg being dead? Can you prove it?” he asked anxiously.

“Of course. He was killed in a railway accident in Ohio three years ago. I was with him, and I am sure I still have among my old papers the pocket memorandum book which I took from his pocket. It gave me his name, and a few minutes before he died he recovered consciousness enough to confirm it.”

“Was this before or after my marriage, do you happen to remember?”

“About six weeks after. As a newspaper man, I knew the circumstances of the case, and therefore was interested in meeting Vanderburg. Of course I knew nothing further.”

Broughton walked back and forth with nervous steps.

"We will be married again, at once, and very privately," he said, in an unsteady voice. "That will satisfy her mind. What an amazing tangle it has been. And what luck — what amazing luck — that I should have come across you, the one man who could give that essential information about Vanderburg's death. Without that, where would we be, even with Fullerton dead? — We would not dare to take chances."

He wrung Lyon's hand with a grip that hurt.

Edith Wolcott came to the door. "Will you go in now?" she said. "She is conscious and anxious to see you."

Broughton went in, and Edith Wolcott, with a warning finger on her lip, drew Lyon across the hall into the little sitting room where they had talked earlier in the evening.

"They are happy," she said, with a catch in her voice. "All has come out well for them. But if she stays in Waynscott, will she not be called as a witness? And if she tells that story of Arthur's anger with Fullerton will it not go against him on the trial?"

"It is already known that there was bitterness between the two men," said Lyon thoughtfully. "She would add no new element to the evidence against him by confirming that, though Howell may think it best to whisk her away. But I want to consult him about that, first. And if she is to be secreted, it will involve something more

than merely taking a train at the Union Station."

"Then that other matter," said Miss Wolcott, hesitatingly. "She saw me in the hall at the Wellington that evening. You know I told you that I went to him with a wild idea that I might make him give up my letters, and that I failed. It was that same evening. I gave up my purpose because I saw him come out with a lady. She was veiled and I did not recognize Mrs. Broughton, but she recognized me. And Bede trapped her into admitting it yesterday. How he got any suspicion of my visit, I can't guess. But he did."

Lyon nodded. This he already knew, but he felt there was much he did not know.

"So if she is called to the witness stand, *that* will come out." She looked at him with troubled eyes. "You can't imagine how I dread the idea of having my name connected with it in any way. I would rather die! Do you think they will make me tell publicly all that I told you? Isn't there *any* way for me to escape? When I think of the newspapers, — the gossip, —" She clenched her hands in desperation. "And if it would do Arthur any good, either! But it wouldn't. If anything, it would hurt him, I suppose." She looked at him wistfully.

Lyon considered rapidly and resolved to hazard a question which might prove a very boom-

erang if the answer was not what he hoped it would be.

"Miss Wolcott, you remember that Lawrence called on you that Sunday before the tragedy?"

She looked startled. "Yes."

"Did he forget his cane here when he left?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure. I should have seen it the next day."

"And you have not seen it at all?"

"No."

"Would you have noticed it, without fail? Your grandfather has quite a collection of canes, I have noticed."

"Yes; but I would have seen Arthur's if he had left it."

"You know it, then?"

"Yes. I remember we spoke of it particularly that evening when he first came. I made some teasing remark about it being dandified to carry a cane, and he retorted that he carried it for protection. He said, I remember, that a gold headed cane was quite as effective as a sandbag, and more elegant. He advised me to carry one of Dandy's canes if I ever had occasion to go out alone in the evening."

"He said that? Just that?"

"Yes. We were just talking nonsense, you know. It was when he first came."

Lyon felt both relieved and disappointed. At least he could assure Lawrence that Miss Wolcott denied all knowledge of the cane. That would be something. Yet if Lawrence was as positive as he seemed to be about having left it here, would her denial have any weight? Lawrence could not doubt his own knowledge of facts. Might it be possible that Mr. Wolcott had carried the cane away somewhere?

As though in answer to his unspoken thought, the old gentleman, in a flapping dressing gown, with a lighted candle in his hand and a highly disapproving look on his face appeared at that moment at the door.

"I *thought* I heard voices, but I couldn't quite believe my ears," he said, with a frowning glance. "Do you know what time it is, young man?"

"Time that I were going, I know," said Lyon briskly. "It must be well on toward twelve."

"Well on toward two in the morning," protested Mr. Wolcott.

"You don't really mean it! I certainly have lost count of the time. I'm going this minute. Forgive me for keeping you up in this unconscionable way, Miss Wolcott. And good night."

He pressed her hand encouragingly, and went out to the hall where he had hung his hat and coat. Fortunately the door to the library was tight closed, as his first glance had assured him. He should have to leave it to Miss Wolcott to

see that Broughton had a chance to slip out later.

As he was about to let himself out, his ruling passion reasserted itself. Blandly he looked the old gentleman in the eye. "I believe I'll ask you to lend me a cane, since it's so late," he said.

"Surely, surely. Take this one," cried the flattered old gentleman. "Or perhaps you would like this better? It is heavier."

"I don't want to take one that you are accustomed to carrying yourself, if you have an odd one around you don't use. By the way, didn't you say that my friend Lawrence left a cane here once? I might take that, as he is not likely to call for it immediately."

"Lawrence? No, he never left a cane here. These are all mine. Here, take this one. You'll find it light and tough."

"Thank you," said Lyon, taking it perforce. "I thought someone spoke of a cane belonging to Lawrence, —"

"He never left it here," said the old gentleman definitely, and Lyon had to let himself out of the house without further satisfaction. He crossed the yard to Broughton's house, let himself in, and while he waited for his romantic landlord to escape, like a concealed Romeo, from his lady's bower, he mentally reviewed the situation.

Mrs. Broughton had cleared up her own connection with Fullerton. Whatever of mystery

there had been in her movements, and whatever of rashness, it touched her personal history only. She had not killed Fullerton, nor had she witnessed his murder. The fleeing woman whom he had seen on the fatal night was not she. He had been entirely wrong in his suspicion, and his pursuit of that clue had done no good except to assist in bringing Broughton and his wife together. That was a good thing in itself, but it would not affect Lawrence's case.

Was it then possible that Lawrence had been right in his first suspicion that the fleeing woman was Edith Wolcott? She had told her story so clearly and with so much apparent frankness that Lyon found it very hard to believe she could really be concealing so vital a point in her account of that evening. However, whether innocent or guilty, her whole connection with the affair and her relation to the two principals was bound to come out, now that Bede had got on her trail. That was bad. The publicity of such a trial would be as bitter as death to such a woman. It was the very thing Lawrence had risked everything to avoid.

And Lawrence himself? His case looked darker than ever to his brooding friend. Unless he could explain away the evidence of the broken cane, the implication was against him. Apparently he could not explain that away. He had certainly implied to Lyon that the cane had been

left at Miss Wolcott's, and that this was the reason he could say nothing on the subject. But since Miss Wolcott, who certainly was interested in his acquittal, and her grandfather, who certainly was innocent of all complicity, both were positive he had not left it there, what could one think? Lyon felt utterly and completely at sea.

His brooding was cut short by the entrance of Broughton.

"I had to wait until the old gentleman had gone back upstairs and the house was quiet," he said, as he lit a cigar. His face was glowing, and he looked twenty years younger than the "Olden" who had spoken with Lyon in that room two nights before. "Then Grace let me out. Miss Wolcott had left the door unbolted. Grace is bearing up wonderfully. I say, isn't she a wonderful woman?"

"Miss Wolcott?" asked Lyon perversely.

"I meant Grace. But Miss Wolcott is all right. She has stood by her like a trump. I won't soon forget that. Well, it has been pretty hard on all of us, but it is all right now."

"How about Lawrence?" asked Lyon.

"Lawrence? Oh, Lawrence! Well, of course I don't know anything about Lawrence," said Broughton somewhat vaguely.

Lyon smothered a groan with a laugh.

"Well, your happiness does not make Law-

rence's case any worse, so far as that goes. And Mrs. Broughton's testimony — ”

“ I hope she will not be called on to testify in this case. It would be very unpleasant — ”

“ Undoubtedly. But Bede will have her subpoenaed if he thinks she can help his side. And before you smuggle her away, I must lay the matter before Howell. You know Howell has been waiting days and days for a chance to see Mrs. Broughton himself. Bede didn't wait.”

Broughton looked as though the idea were distasteful, but he was too manly a man to shirk an issue.

“ All right,” he said. “ You may give Howell the situation to-morrow.”

“ To-day,” said Lyon, pulling out his watch. “ What will this day bring forth? ”

He was soon to find out. Fate had been dodging behind covers for a long time. Now she was ready to come out into the open.

CHAPTER XXII

ALTHOUGH it was nearly three before Lyon went to sleep, he awoke the next morning earlier than usual and lay for some time figuring on the problem that possessed his mind before he thought of such a thing as dressing. He must see Howell and acquaint him with the strange developments of the night before as soon as possible, but Howell was old-fashioned, and he kept no telephone at his residence, for the express purpose of warding off the intrusion of business matters upon his hours at home. It was useless, therefore, to try to communicate with him before he reached his office, which would be at ten precisely.

While Lyon lay speculating on the situation, his eye fell upon the knotted handkerchief containing the booty which he had brought away from his raid upon Fullerton's room last night. The pressing incidents that had followed had put it for the time completely out of his mind. He sprang from the bed to examine it.

It was a curious record of a curious form of villainy that the little package revealed. The

notes were all from women, who, by fault or fortune, had given him some hold upon their fears. Evidently the phase of Fullerton's nature revealed by the decadent literature and pictures in his room had had dark and complex ramifications in his career. The rule of terror which he had held over Edith Wolcott and Mrs. Broughton was, it would seem, only an instance of the methods by which, for the sake of money or malice or for pure delight in devilry, he had made himself master of the secret history of women, and had used his knowledge to keep them trembling under his lash.

Lyon soon found to his relief that it was not necessary for him to read the whole of a letter to classify it, and he conscientiously averted his eyes from the signatures. What an oppression must have lifted from the face of nature when this man was dead! The man must have possessed the fascination and the venom of a cobra. Lyon used up a box of matches burning the tell-tale notes over his ash-receiver, and felt that if he should have failed in everything else, it would have been worth all to save this package of pitiful secrets from the cold official eye of Bede.

Two letters only he saved from the cleansing flame. They were from William Vanderburg and contained the information which had enabled Fullerton to terrorize Mrs. Broughton. These he kept to turn over to Broughton, and with them

he placed the old note-book of Vanderburg's which he had taken from the pocket of the dying man. It was a curious fact that the two tangled threads of that story should have come into his hands and that chance should have brought his path and Mrs. Broughton's again together.

On his way downstairs, an impulse not wholly devoid of mischief sent him to the 'phone. If it was too early to talk to Howell, he could at any rate get Bede on the line, — and he did.

"Hello, Mr. Bede," he said, respectfully. "This is Lyon, of the *News*. Any new developments in the Lawrence case?"

"I think I'd better ask you that question," said Bede, somewhat drily.

"Oh, I mean authentic information, not newspaper imagination," protested Lyon.

"I'd like to know, Mr. Lyon, just how much of your innocence is authentic and how much is newspaper imagination."

"Oh, come, you're making fun of me. Really, haven't you any news items to give me?"

"Not a scrap. You are very well able to help yourself to what you want, young man." And Bede suspended the receiver and the conversation.

That cheered Lyon a little, but as he came out into the streets his footsteps lagged. His imagination had achieved little good in the present case. It had simply led him wandering far afield. He had imagined that the woman who fled from

the scene of Fullerton's murder might be Mrs. Broughton instead of Miss Wolcott. It was not Mrs. Broughton, — and now Bede knew all about Mrs. Broughton's share in the evening's events. Whether it was Miss Wolcott or not seemed as debatable as at first. Lawrence undoubtedly believed it was. Whether Bede believed it or not, he certainly had unearthed the facts that she had visited the Wellington to see Fullerton earlier in the evening, and that she had been at the drug-store on Hemlock Avenue a few minutes before the time when Fullerton must have been struck down by Lawrence's cane. The cards were therefore practically all in his hands, and the defence could only hope to do what he might graciously permit. It was maddening.

That fatal cane! It was the one bit of evidence more than circumstantial. It must be explained.

In his dejection Lyon had walked along Hemlock Avenue to Sherman Street. The empty lot where the cane had been discovered was on his left, and he crossed the street, and stopped to look down into the trampled hollow. That cursed cane! How was it possible that it had come here unless by Lawrence's hand? He scowled at the spot, with gloom on his brow and perplexity in his mind, till someone stopped beside him, and an eager old voice asked,

"What is happening? Anything?"

It was old Mr. Wolcott, eager-eyed and interested as ever. He tried to discover what it was that was attracting Lyon's attention, with a lively curiosity that made Lyon laugh, even in his depression.

"I was looking for an inspiration," he said, "but I can't see one. I'm afraid it's hopeless."

"Sometimes you see queer things when you don't expect to," the old gentleman said, cheerfully. "Once I saw a dog-fight down in that hollow."

"Did you?" responded Lyon, looking at his watch. "I must be going on. I've been killing time till I could see a man down town."

"It was a lively fight. There is a Boston terrier up in our neighborhood that is a fighter. I don't like fighting dogs myself, — and this one is a terror. He is always pitching on to some poor little fellow that isn't big enough to stand up to him, and doesn't have a chance to run. I broke my cane over him."

"Indeed?" murmured Lyon, with polite indifference. Then the echo of the words rang through the silence of his mind, — louder and louder, until he pulled up with a start, as though some one had been calling to him for a long time and he had just become conscious of it. "You broke your cane over him?" he repeated, and it seemed to him that everything about him sud-

denly stood still till he should get the answer. "Was that here, — in this hollow?"

"Yes. He's a big brute of a dog, and he had the little fellow by the throat —"

"Yes, yes. What did you do with the pieces?"

"The pieces of the cane?"

"Yes. What did you do with them?"

The old man laughed somewhat slyly. "Edith doesn't like to hear about things like that. She thinks that I am too old to go in and straighten out a dog-fight. I don't tell her when anything of that sort happens."

"I see," said Lyon eagerly. "So you hid the pieces?"

The old man nodded cannily. "She'd never miss the cane. I have a lot of other walking sticks. But if she saw the broken pieces, she'd get the whole story out of me."

"Where did you hide them?"

"Oh, I put them out of sight, all right."

"But where, man, where? Show me the place."

"But I don't want them," protested Mr. Wolcott. "It was an old cane, anyhow. I didn't mind breaking it."

"I just wanted to see if you had found a good hiding place. Do you suppose the pieces are still there?"

"They aren't any good."

"No, but let's look and see, anyhow. Was it hereabouts?"

"Just under the sidewalk here. There's a hole under the sidewalk that you see when you are down in the hollow."

"Come down and show me. Here, I'll help you down, and Miss Edith won't guess where you have been."

The old man chuckled. This added a thrill to the affair, and with some difficulty and hard breathing he climbed down into the low-lying lot and made his way over the snow-covered hummocks of last summer's weeds to the place which was more familiar to Lyon than it was to him.

"Right in there," he said, pointing to the famous spot where Lawrence's cane had been found. "Perhaps they are there now. I poked them quite far in. But I can't see anything in there."

"You remember the place? You are sure it was right there?"

"There isn't any other place where I could poke them in, is there?"

"No, I don't see that there is. Now, can you remember when it was that you put them in there? Was there anything that would fix the date in your mind?"

"You remember that day you came to the house to see Edith, — the first time you came?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was the last time I had been out for

a walk before that. Not that day. It was on a Monday, because I remember that I didn't go out Sunday because it stormed. Monday I went, and that was when I saw the dogs fighting."

"What sort of a cane was it?" asked Lyon, as he helped the old gentleman to recover the upper levels of the street.

"Oh, it wasn't a cane I cared for specially. It was just an old one."

"But what was it like? Did it have a heavy knob or a little one? Can you describe it?"

"It had a pretty heavy knob. But the wood broke off right at my hand when I beat the dog off. It wasn't a very stout cane. I got it in New Orleans in 1842."

"I have noticed that you have a good collection of canes. I'd like to look at them, if you have time."

The old gentleman blossomed into a pathetic vivacity under this unexpected interest in his affairs.

"Oh, they are nothing to speak of. Not more than eight or nine. When I was younger, I was something of a dandy, and I liked to have whatever was going in that sort of thing. There weren't many that could show a better style in little things than I could. But nobody thinks an old man like me counts. No one cares for what I have."

"I should very much like to see your canes,"

said Lyon. "I have been interested in canes lately. I can think of nothing that would please me more than an opportunity to examine your collection. May I go home with you now and see them?"

"I shall have great pleasure in showing them to you," Mr. Wolcott answered, with dignified courtesy, turning homeward at once. "Though I fear that my modest collection is hardly worthy the attention of a connoisseur."

"I can hardly claim to be a connoisseur," protested Lyon in the same vein. "I merely have a personal interest and curiosity which I may say amounts to a passion. Now, I suppose you can tell me where you got each and every cane you own."

"Certainly I can. Edith says that I am forgetful, but I remember the things that happened a few years back well enough. I can tell you just where each one came from. Here we are. Come in, sir, come in. I am glad to have you here as my guest. I don't have so many visitors."

Miss Wolcott, hearing her grandfather enter, had come into the hall to look after him, and she was evidently surprised to see his companion. Her surprise could hardly equal that of Lyon, however, at the change which a day had made in her appearance. Instead of the somewhat severe and marvellously self-controlled woman whom he had seen before, he saw a radiant girl, tremulous

and eager. The statue had been touched with life. She came forward with a questioning look.

"Has anything new come up? Did you wish to see me?" she asked under her breath.

"Not yet," he answered, in the same tone, but she read something in his eye that made her watch him.

But the old gentleman did not like this disregard of his prior and exclusive claims as the host.

"Mr. Lyon came to see me, Edith. Sit down, Mr. Lyon. My canes are right here in the hall. I have never made anything like a collection, and I am afraid you will be disappointed, but this one was my father's. I've always kept that as a souvenir, but I never carried it myself. It was cracked when I got it, and I was afraid of breaking it. This thin little cane was one I carried as a young man. The dandies carried them for dress canes when they went beaung the young ladies in those days. I could tell tales — ! You wouldn't suspect it, Edith, but your grandfather was quite a lady-killer in his day."

"This stout stick is the one that you usually carry, I see," said Lyon. He had run his eye over the entire lot when they were first laid before him, and the hope he had cherished that a cane resembling the one that Lawrence had carried might be found here had swiftly vanished. There was nothing like it. Still, even without that final link his discovery was so nearly perfect

that he could hardly in reason ask for more. He rose, eager to get to Howell with his news. Edith, watchful of his face, guessed that there was something more in his inquiry than appeared upon the surface.

"Dandy has another cane upstairs, if you want to know about his entire collection," she said.

"No, I haven't, Edith."

"Oh, yes, you have, Dandy. It's in your room, behind the door. That cane with the heavy top that you got in New Orleans in 1842."

The old gentleman chuckled, and essayed an elaborate wink at Lyon.

"Oh, it's upstairs, is it?"

"Yes, I put it there yesterday. I came across it in the back hall. I think Eliza had kept it up there to straighten the pictures with."

"You are talking nonsense, Edith," her grandfather interrupted, impatiently. "I know where that cane is. It got broken and I threw it away. It was an old cane, anyhow, — not worth making a fuss over."

"I wonder if you could find it," Lyon said to the girl, in a swift aside. She ran at once upstairs, and in a few moments returned, a little breathless, but successful. She was carrying a heavy-headed cane which in general appearance was very like the broken cane which had figured in the trial. Lyon's eyes sparkled when he saw it. His idea that Lawrence had forgotten his cane here in the

hall, and that the old gentleman, whose eyesight was confessedly so bad that he could not read the newspapers, had picked it out of the hall rack by mistake for one of his own, seemed now conclusively proved. And after all his work, that the actual discovery of the fact should come so by accident and casually!

"Is this your New Orleans cane, — the one you told me about?" he asked.

The old gentleman was examining it with a puzzled look and growing perplexity. "I don't understand it," he murmured. "I guess I must be getting old. I ought to be dead."

"Nonsense. The explanation is very simple, and I think I can tell you what it is. But first, *is* this your New Orleans cane?"

"It certainly seems to be."

"Would you swear to it?"

"But what was that other cane?"

"Let us settle this first. Would you swear to this one, — that it is your own, and that this is the cane that you thought you had with you when you broke your stick across those fighting dogs? You may be asked in court to testify to that point, Mr. Wolcott. Can you swear that this stick is actually the one that you thought you had broken?"

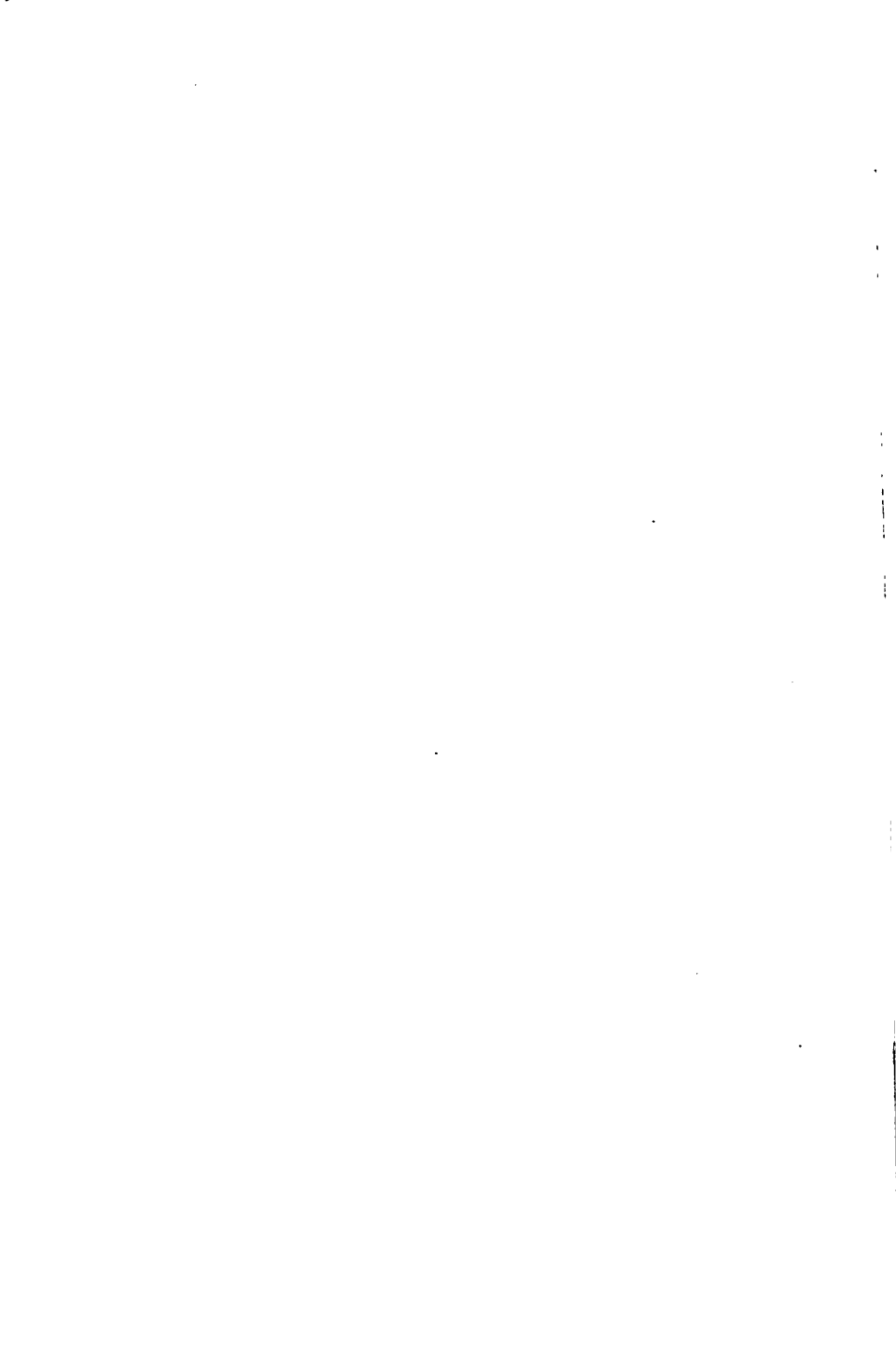
"Why, of course it is. I know my own stick. But I don't understand —"

"It is very simple. Lawrence left his cane here



“THE OLD GENTLEMAN WAS EXAMINING IT WITH A PUZZLED
LOOK AND GROWING PERPLEXITY.”

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one evening, and the next morning, when you went for your walk, you took it in mistake for your own. It was just about the size and weight of this one, and you would not be likely to notice the difference since it was not the cane you commonly carried. You broke the cane, and put the pieces under the edge of the sidewalk. They were found there immediately after Fullerton's murder, and as Lawrence's name was engraved around the knob, they seemed to connect him circumstantially with the murder. It has been the one point we could not get around."

"But didn't he remember that he had left it here? I can't understand why that did not occur to him," Miss Wolcott exclaimed.

"Can't you imagine why he would not allow himself to remember?" Lyon asked, bluntly.

"No. I don't understand you. *Allow* himself to remember? Why not? If it was merely a question of where he had left his cane, it would not have been a serious matter to answer, would it?"

"But suppose he, too, thought, as all the rest of us did, that the cane had been the instrument of Fullerton's death?"

"But it was not!"

"No, but it seemed so. And with that seeming fact before him, he could not defend himself by saying he had left it here without throwing the same suspicion upon someone in this house."

"But he could not entertain so absurd a suspicion!"

"It was far from absurd. Do you remember you told me that he had said that a good stout cane was better than a policeman's whistle, and that he advised you to carry one of your grandfather's sticks if you had to go out at night?"

"Yes, I remember very well. Of course it was all in jest. We were not talking seriously then."

"I suspect he thought afterwards that you might have taken his suggestion seriously."

"What do you mean?"

"He has absolutely refused to give any hint of where he had lost his cane. Of course he had not forgotten. But there was in his mind the possibility that you had, under some necessity, acted upon his suggestion, and had taken his cane with you when you went out that night, —" He had been talking rapidly, following out his own line of reasoning, and forgetting for the moment that the implication it contained must be startling to her, till he was pulled up by the look of horror and amazement that had gathered on her face.

"What are you saying?" she cried. "Good heavens, what do you mean? You haven't been thinking that I—I killed Mr. Fullerton with Arthur's cane?"

"I haven't," said Lyon, simply. "I haven't from the first. But it was very natural that, knowing what he knew and not knowing what

he didn't, Lawrence should have felt that to clear himself would be to implicate you."

Her horror was too deep for words. She only stared at him, with that fixed look of dismay.

"Of course," added Lyon, "now that we can explain the cane away, he will probably speak out."

"Was that why he was so anxious I should say nothing? — because he thought I — oh, it is not to be believed!"

"But consider, Miss Wolcott! It seemed very clear. He knew he had left his cane here, he of course remembered the talk you had had about it as a weapon of defense, he knew that you were out of the house that evening, because he called to see you at a quarter of nine and you were not in. He knew, also, that you had reason to hate Fullerton, he knew that a woman was with Fullerton when he was killed and that when she fled from the spot she came to this house —"

She interrupted him with a cry. "No, no! How can he think that? It is not true! I did go to the Wellington as I told you, meaning to see him and try to appeal to his better nature, if he had one, for the return of my letters, but gave up my plan when I found I could not see him alone. But I saw nothing of him after he left the Wellington with Mrs. Broughton."

"That was early in the evening, — before eight. Did you come straight home?"

"Yes."

"But when Lawrence called at a quarter before nine, —"

"I had shut myself up in my room with a headache, and told Eliza to deny me to any caller."

"Then did you go out again, later?"

She looked surprised. "Yes. I went out to the drugstore afterwards to get something to make me sleep. I was nervous and overwrought, and I wanted to get a quiet night's sleep. Then I came home and went in at the side door and up to my room."

"Do you know what time it was?"

"Yes, my grandfather met me in the hall and was very much excited to find that I had been out alone so late at night. It was a few minutes before ten. I noticed the time particularly, because he was so annoyed about it."

"It all seems very simple, now," said Lyon, cheerfully. "Just what Bede may have up his sleeve, of course I don't know. But I think that with the information that you have given me, we can checkmate him very neatly. Now I must see Howell. With this elimination of the fatal cane as an element in the case, I cannot see that there is anything to connect Lawrence directly with the situation. I think we can expect to have him free at once. If we only could really discover the actual murderer, it might be better, but I am hopeful, as things are."

“Was that all you wanted to see my canes for?” protested Mr. Wolcott, with an air of injury.

Lyon laughed and shook his hand. “I want to add a cane to your collection if you will let me. We’ll go and pick it out the day that Lawrence goes free!”

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Lyon left the Wolcotts, he hurried for the car to reach Howell's office as quickly as possible. As he went down Hemlock Avenue he saw a group of Miss Elliott's girls taking their daily constitutional under the supervision of Miss Rose. In orderly ranks, two by two, they crossed the street sedately, and up on the opposite side, and Lyon scrutinized them eagerly to discover if Kittie was among them. There she was, near the center of the procession, her tall, slight figure swinging in the time of the march, but somehow so much more individual and graceful than any of the others! He was so absorbed in watching her as the file came nearer that he did not notice at all the sound of a runaway behind him until a light delivery wagon, with one wheel gone, dashed frantically by, in the direction of the girls. The horse, wild with terror at the ungainly thing which bumped at his heels, swung in toward the sidewalk, and in a moment the girls had broken ranks and were flying, in swift disorder, in all directions. Lyon had instinctively broken into a run as soon as he

saw the situation, but if he had any intention of catching the horse and cutting an heroic figure in the eyes of Kittie, the thought was utterly and absolutely forgotten the next instant. Instead, he suddenly stood stock still in the middle of the street, staring at one of the girls who had cut diagonally across the road with the long, easy running gait that he had seen once and only once before. It was the girl who had fled from the scene of Fullerton's murder, and so had swept for an instant across the field of Lyon's vision, — and it was not the frail and delicate invalid, Mrs. Broughton, nor yet the slow and stately Miss Wolcott. This was a young athlete, who ran with a grace, a sureness, that made the sight a joy and unforgettable. It was not until she had turned again and was clinging to his arm for protection that he fully realized what it meant that he should have identified the running girl whom he had so long been searching for with Kittie Tayntor.

“Oh, Cousin Percy, wasn't it perfectly beautiful that the horse should run away right here and give you a chance to rescue me like this? I have always wanted to be rescued to see what it would feel like. The girls in the novels almost always faint, but I never faint, so I knew I would always be able to remember afterwards just how it felt. I *was* so glad when I saw that you were the only man in sight on the street!”

"Kittie, when we were talking about Mr. Fullerton, why didn't you tell me what you knew about it?"

"What I knew? About what?"

"About the — accident."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

She looked so plainly bewildered that his heart sank. Could it be, after all, that she really knew nothing. She *must* know! He took up the filmy clue carefully.

"Kittie, one evening not long ago — it was on the Monday before Thanksgiving — I was on Hemlock Avenue opposite Miss Wolcott's, and I saw a girl run across the street, and in at the Wolcotts' side yard. She ran just as you ran a minute ago when that horse startled you. Wasn't that girl you?"

"Oh, *yes!* I didn't know what you were talking about. Did you really see me then? How curious! Then *that* was the first time!"

"It was a little before ten?"

She nodded, her eyes dancing with suppressed mischief, though she drew her lips down like a fair penitent.

"Where had you been, Kittie?"

"To the skating rink on Elm Street."

"Alone?"

She nodded again, and glanced back at Miss Rose, who was gathering her scattered flock together at a safe distance beyond hearing.

"It was this way," she said, hurriedly. "Everybody else had gone home for the vacation on Saturday, and Miss Elliott had made me stay till Tuesday to make up some history. I was just wild about it, missing three whole days. I got thinking what I could do to get even, — it would be a secret satisfaction even if she never knew it. So Monday night I climbed down from my room by way of the window, and got out by the Secret Passage I told you there was, and went to the rink and had a splendid time. I knew Miss Elliott had a friend visiting her, and so she would not be likely to think of me or anything like that. And she didn't. She never knew I wasn't learning the names of the Roman emperors, horrid old things, all the time."

"But, Kittie, is that all?"

"Goodness! Miss Elliott would think it was enough!"

"But what made you run so? You ran as though you were frightened."

She gave him a startled look and half turned away. She did not answer.

"What frightened you? Had you seen anything, — a row, or a fight of any sort?"

She shook her head. "I was frightened," she said, "but it isn't worth talking about. Besides, it isn't pleasant. I don't want to talk about it."

"But I have a very special reason for asking, Kittie. It isn't just curiosity."

"Well, a horrid man frightened me. I suppose he was drunk. But if Miss Elliott knew about that —!"

"How did he frighten you?"

"He jumped out at me. It's a kind of dark place on Sherman Street, and I was scurrying along and I didn't see him at all until I was right up to him, and then as I hurried by he suddenly jumped out and caught my arm."

"Did you scream?"

"I shrieked and struck at him —"

"What with?"

"Why, I just struck out. But I had my skates in my hand and I guess I hit him, because he let go of my arm. Then I ran as hard as I could."

The physician's testimony at the inquest flashed across Lyon's mind, — "a heavy instrument with a cutting edge." Kitty's skate and not Lawrence's cane! The relief was so great that he almost forgot the necessity of establishing all the links. But Miss Rose was approaching, and he knew he must lose no time.

"How was he dressed, Kittie?"

"Goodness! I didn't stop to see."

"But in dark clothes or light? Did he wear a hat?"

"He had a long loose grey coat, and a hat pulled away down over his eyes. And a silk muffler around his throat was pulled up over his chin. That came off in my hand when I pushed him

away. I didn't know I had it until I had run half a block. Then I threw it in the street."

Lyon nodded. "I found it. Now, Kittie, I want you to come and show me the exact spot on Sherman Street where this happened."

Her face was already flushed and her breath coming fast with her recital, but she now looked annoyed at his persistence.

"I can't. Miss Rose is waiting for me now. And besides, —" she hesitated to impugn his chivalry by so unworthy a suggestion, but needs must, — "you aren't going to *tell*?"

"Kittie, haven't you any idea who that man was?"

She looked shocked at the question. "Of course not!" Then the seriousness of his tone struck her and she began to tremble.

"What do you mean?"

"It was Mr. Fullerton, — I am sure it must have been. But you must come and show me the spot. You know that Mr. Lawrence is in jail under suspicion of having killed him."

"Yes." Then, suddenly, she understood. She went very white and her eyes grew large with horror. He feared she would faint, but Kittie was not of the fainting sort. Instead she began talking volubly, in intense nervous excitement.

"I don't care, he hadn't any business to jump out of the shadows in that way. He just did it to frighten me, and it made my heart beat so ter-

ribly that I didn't know *what* I was doing. I just struck at him and I didn't think about the skates, and if Miss Elliott hears about it she will simply be hysterical. I'll have to tell her how I got out and that will be breaking my initiation oath and there will simply be nothing terrible enough for her to say. And—" she stopped suddenly as a new horror struck her, and gasped. "Will they put me in jail?"

"I think probably not, but we'll have to see Mr. Howell, the lawyer, and let him arrange in regard to all that."

His hesitancy was more terrible than anything she had expected. It struck her dumb.

"You never suspected, when you saw the report in the paper the next day, that the man found dead on Sherman Street was the man you had met?"

"I never saw the papers," said Kittie. "Miss Elliott doesn't allow them to come into the school. And besides I went away early Tuesday morning, you know, and didn't come back till Saturday. I never heard a thing about it."

"I see. And when you came back, and became acquainted with Mrs. Broughton, and she spoke of Lawrence and Fullerton, you would naturally never connect that with what had happened to you, especially as you did not know that the man was dead. I see. Now, first of all, I want you to come around and show me the place so as to

make sure there is no mistake, and then we'll take the car down town and see Mr. Howell. I'll explain to Miss Rose. Would you like to have her come with you?"

She shook her head.

"Or any of the girls?"

"No. They are sillies. I don't want to tell any of *them*. I'd rather have nobody there but just you. You will take all the responsibility, won't you?"

"Yes," said Lyon, with an emphasis that she did not altogether understand until somewhat later in the story. "I am going to take the whole responsibility of you from this time on, and you must always tell me when you do anything like — killing people, you know. Someone will always have to explain such things, and I am just as good at explaining as anyone. Promise you will let me — look out for you always."

She looked at him doubtfully. "But — if I have to go right to jail?"

"Perhaps that can be avoided. But you must come down with me to Mr. Howell's office and tell him the whole story. That is the first thing. I think he will be able to fix it up so that you won't have to go to jail even for a minute. Wait here for me while I run back to explain to Miss Rose."

Poor Miss Rose was the most bewildered woman in town when Lyon hastily told her that

it would be necessary for him to take Miss Tayntor down town for an interview with his lawyer, and that there was not time for her to go back to the school to secure Miss Elliott's permission.

"But it would be entirely contrary to the rules to allow one of our pupils to go down town alone with a man," she protested, feebly.

"That's too bad," said Lyon, sympathetically. "You just tell Miss Elliott that I was in too much of a hurry to see her and explain, but I will come around and tell her about it afterwards." He hurried back to where poor Kittie, looking much more like a frightened school-girl than like a deep-dyed criminal, awaited him on the corner.

"Now come on," he said. "We must have this over as soon as possible and then I'll take you to Sweetzer's and you are to pick out the biggest box of chocolates he can fill while we have time to wait. We'll go down Sherman Street first. Oh, Kittie, Kittie, what a dance you have been leading me for the last two weeks! I have been suspecting everybody but you. Now show me where the man stood."

"There," she said, pointing to the exact spot where Fullerton's body had been found.

"That, I think, settles everything," said Lyon, cheerfully. "You see, the law is particular, so I had to know exactly. It will be worth a month's salary to see old Howell's face when he hears your story."

He thought he had really placed the estimate too low when he sat watching that amazed gentleman listening to Kittie a few minutes later. That witch, whose terrors of the rigors of the law had been somewhat softened by Percy's manner of receiving her story, rose to the dramatic occasion and told her tale with a vividness and color that held Howell absorbed from the beginning. He let her tell the whole without interruption, and when it was over he turned to Lyon, drawing him aside so that Kittie should not hear.

"Perhaps you don't remember, but for several weeks before the murder there were stories of a man who lurked about that district, frightening women and eluding the police. There have been no such reports since Fullerton was killed. That explains the turned overcoat worn inside-out for a disguise, and the black silk muffler you found in the street. A quick change and the respectable, black-coated Fullerton had replaced the skulking vagrant in gray that the police might be inquiring for. I am not a pious man, but it strikes me as more than accident that the hand of an innocent girl should be the instrument, under Providence, to send him to his account. However, that is speculation. Thank heaven I have some facts to deal with, at last."

"And I've found the explanation of the cane business," said Lyon. "You can add that to your small but choice assortment of facts."

And he related his encounter with Mr. Wolcott, and the significant facts that had been evolved from that gentle old peace-maker of canine quarrels.

Howell rubbed his glasses, and put them on to look at Lyon, and then took them off to rub them again.

"Well!" he remarked. "Well, well!" It seemed inadequate, but it was the best he could do with Kittie present.

Then he called in a stenographer, and asked Kittie a number of questions slowly, and the stenographer wrote them down, and also, to Kittie's dismay, wrote her answers. This process seemed to her so uncanny that she could not keep her eyes from the point of the rapid pencil, and even when Mr. Howell bade her look at him and not at the stenographer, she could hardly keep herself from turning nervously to see if that thing was still going. Then she had to wait until it was all written out on the typewriter, and then Mr. Howell read it all over to her and asked her to sign it. It was all very exciting and interesting, and Kittie made good use of it as material for tales afterwards. But when it was over, and the box of chocolates had been duly selected and sampled, Kittie suddenly felt that she had been living up to the character of a reasonable being long enough, and when Lyon suggested that he would go back with her to the school and tell

Miss Elliott what they had been doing, Kittie calmly announced that she was never going back there. Never.

"But, Kittie, you will have to! That is your home while you are at school."

"I shall never go back there."

"But why not?"

"Do you suppose I could ever tell Miss Elliott that I had killed somebody? Why, I'd rather go to jail. Honest."

"Where else can you go?"

"I don't know. But I won't go there. I won't ever go where Miss Elliott can say anything to me until I am as old as she is, — or till I am married, maybe."

"But you will have to go somewhere for a day or two, you know. You needn't be afraid. Miss Elliott won't say anything when she understands, —"

"No, she won't, because I won't give her the chance. I won't be there for her to say anything to."

"Kittie, dear, —"

"It doesn't make any difference what you say. I won't go."

"Do you know anyone in Waynscott?"

"No. But I can go to a hotel."

"No, you can't. That's nonsense."

"Now you are not being polite." And her lip trembled in a way that warned Lyon she was near

the verge of tears. He looked distractedly up and down the street, — for they had been waiting on the corner for the car when this deadlock developed, — and then he had an inspiration.

“Will you let me take you to Miss Wolcott’s?”

She looked at him suspiciously. “You needn’t think that if you get me so near the school as that, I will change my mind and go in. Because I won’t.”

“Oh, Kittie, I’m not trying to play any tricks on you! I’d know better than to try! But you must go somewhere, and if you won’t go back to Miss Elliott’s, I don’t know of a better place for you to go than to Miss Wolcott’s. She will be glad to see you and to help you, because she is engaged to Arthur Lawrence, and your — your statement to Mr. Howell will set him free, you see, so she will feel under obligations to you on that account. You must have a woman friend to stay with, Kittie. It wouldn’t be nice for you to go off anywhere by yourself.”

“You needn’t tell me that,” said Kittie, with quick offense. “I guess I know what is proper. All right, I’ll go to Miss Wolcott’s if I have to. But she needn’t think she can lecture me.”

“Mrs. Broughton is staying with Miss Wolcott, I forgot to tell you. You like her, you know.”

“Like her!” exclaimed Kittie with a swift

clearing of her darkened brow. "Why, I'd go to her if she was on the tip-top of the North Pole. She's the only one in all the world I do like." She stole a glance at him from the corner of her eye as she made this sweeping statement.

Lyon made no answer. The subject was too large to discuss.

CHAPTER XXIV

LYON would probably have found himself somewhat embarrassed in explaining Kittie and her methods to Miss Wolcott if Mrs. Broughton had not been there. But Mrs. Broughton was there (and so was Mr. Broughton, whose presence at an exceedingly hasty and exceedingly private wedding that morning had been found necessary), and when Kittie saw her she ran to her and clung to her with hidden face, while Lyon told her story to the amazed little group of three.

“Poor child, poor child,” murmured Mrs. Broughton, softly, touching the defiant little head that was crushed against her sleeve.

“Will Mr. Lawrence be released, then, without anything further?” asked Edith Wolcott. It was perhaps natural that to her that would be the pivotal point of the situation.

“Immediately. Howell is attending to the red tape of it now. It certainly won't take long.”

Edith put up her hand to hide her trembling lips. Mrs. Broughton gave her a glance of sympathetic understanding, and then said to Lyon,

"And what about this dear little girl? Are there any other formalities, —"

"Howell will take care of that. There isn't anything to worry about. Her deposition will be laid before the county attorney, but as I understood it, she is not likely to be called on for much of anything else. The Grand Jury would only act on information laid before them, and if the county attorney is satisfied, there won't be any bill brought. In the meantime, —"

"I won't go back to Miss Elliott's. I won't — ever," Kittie interrupted suddenly.

Lyon glanced hesitatingly at Miss Wolcott, but that young woman was regarding the volcanic schoolgirl with surprise and with no special warmth of emotion.

"That's what she says," said Lyon, with a whimsical appeal. "If she persists, I suppose I must write — or someone must — to her uncle in Columbus, and explain why she refuses, and assure him that she is safe with friends until he can arrange for her."

"I won't go back to Uncle Joe," said Kittie, sitting up suddenly. "Do you think I could go to them and explain that I had — had *killed* anybody? Why, they would think I was crazy. They would look at me so. I won't go to anybody that knows me."

Lyon looked distressed. Miss Wolcott looked annoyed and perplexed. Mrs. Broughton looked

at her husband, — a long glance, at least three sentences long, — and then she said quietly,

“Would you like to come to New York and stay with me for the rest of the winter, Kittie?”

“Would I?” gasped Kittie.

“Do you think your uncle and aunt would consent to your coming to pay me a visit?”

“They’d have to,” said Kittie, calmly.

Mrs. Broughton laughed.

“We’ll see what we can do by way of persuasion first. We’ll go by way of Columbus when we go on, and explain our plans. I can’t spare my little nurse yet. In fact, I think I must have you come with me for a while to the Metropole, while we have to stay in Waynscott. That may be —” she glanced inquiringly at Lyon — “a few days? Or a week?”

“Probably.”

“Then is that all settled?”

Kittie threw her arms around her. “Oh, I’d do anything in the world for you.”

“Then come over to Miss Elliott’s at once, and I will explain everything to her while you pack your trunk.”

Kittie looked dismayed. “Oh, I can’t, —”

“Yes, you can, — with me there. Come, we’ll go at once. You’d better come, too, Woods. Miss Elliott has a tremendous respect for your name!”

Broughton, who looked curiously like a lion

being petted and enjoying the process, turned to Lyon with benign ferocity.

"You will have to come to New York, too, Mr. Lyon. I need you in my business."

Lyon unconsciously looked at Kittie before answering.

"I am ready to consider any proposition you may make, sir."

"All right. We'll talk it over later. But I warn you I shall leave you no possible room for refusing. Yes, Grace, I'm ready."

The Broughtons took Kittie off, bent on smoothing the path for her, and Miss Wolcott turned to Lyon with a sigh of relief.

"What a wild, unmanageable child! I should think that after all the trouble that has come from her act she would at least be a little subdued."

"Oh, it isn't all trouble," said Lyon, assuming as a matter of course his life-long privilege of being Kittie's defender. "Mr. Broughton came out to Waynscott fully determined to shoot Lawrence at sight. Being in jail probably saved his life, — so you ought to count that to Kittie's credit. And would you ever have known the measure of Lawrence's devotion if he had not had this chance of proving how far he could carry it? Then those letters of yours, — if there hadn't been a mystery about Fullerton's death, I should never have been spurred on to run things down, and if I hadn't those letters might have fallen

into who knows whose hands! And Mrs. Broughton's unhappiness, — think of all the trouble and wretchedness those two people are saved through the accident of my being drawn into this Hemlock Avenue mystery! Even Fullerton's death alone would not have cleared the cloud from their lives. It needed the knowledge no one could give them but I, — and I should never have known how much the fact in my possession was needed if I had not met Mrs. Broughton in this curiously intimate way. Indeed, I should probably never have met Mrs. Broughton! Or you! Or Kittie! Or had the friendship of Lawrence. And when you think of each one of us, and how, through this strange tangle, we have all won what we wanted most, don't you think we can say, with Tiny Tim, that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds?"

He glanced at her, smiling, for confirmation. Her face was so radiant that he thought he had for once in his life succeeded in being eloquent. Then his glance followed her eye to the window, and he realized that she had probably heard nothing of what he had been saying. Lawrence was swinging up Hemlock Avenue at a pace that devoured the distance.

"I — er — really, I must go," murmured Lyon, reaching for his hat.

THE END.

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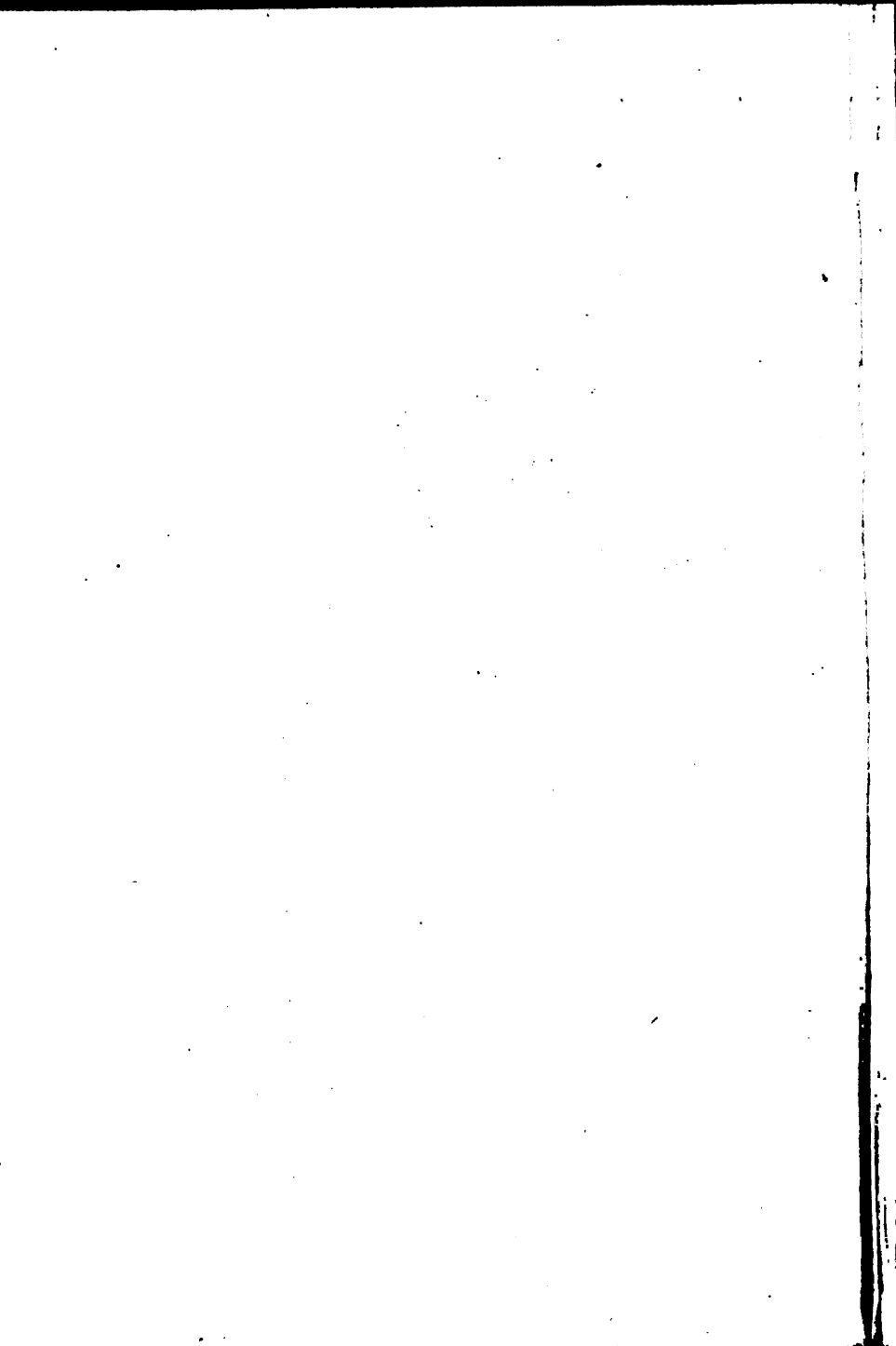
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